

THE CULT OF FASHION

The Earliest *Life of the Virgin* and Constantinople's Marian Relics

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AMONG THE MOST celebrated features of the Byzantine cult of the Virgin are the various clothing relics believed to link the Theotokos especially with the imperial capital, Constantinople. Yet as central as these relics and their shrines were to Byzantine piety across the centuries, their early history remains rather poorly understood. In the early medieval sources as well as in modern scholarship, there is frequent disagreement and confusion regarding the nature of Constantinople's Marian relics and their respective shrines. Mary's garment at Blachernai is perhaps the best documented, but her "girdle" at Chalkoprateia and other items of clothing also appear to have come into the mix early on. Nevertheless, prior to the middle Byzantine period, it is often difficult to ascertain just what is being venerated where. Sources for the early history of these relics and their shrines are often contradictory and difficult to date, frequently projecting traditions and practices from a later time onto an earlier period. Fortunately, a new, if often overlooked, source has recently come to light that can clarify numerous aspects of Marian piety in early Byzantium, including the veneration of Mary's clothing in late ancient Constantinople.

Approximately two decades ago, Michel van Esbroeck published the earliest extant *Life of the Virgin*, a long-overlooked text ascribed to Maximus the Confessor that survives only in the Georgian language.¹ In the introduction to his edition, van Esbroeck presents several credible arguments for the accuracy of this attribution to Maximus, but unfortunately he is not able to resolve the issue decisively. While some uncertainty lingers regarding the authenticity of the *Life of the Virgin*'s attribution, so far

only a single article has challenged Maximus's authorship (rather unsuccessfully), and many specialists on his thought seem at least provisionally to have accepted the *Life of the Virgin* as a work of Maximus.² And regardless of the *Life*'s authorship, it is widely recognized as the earliest extant biography of the Virgin and is almost certainly a work of the seventh century, as several of van Esbroeck's arguments indicate and as I have further clarified in a pair of articles on this text.³ Analysis of the *Life*'s sources and its considerable influence on subsequent Marian literature locates its production sometime within the seventh century, most likely in or around Constantinople.

According to van Esbroeck, some of the most compelling evidence for this provenance is to be found in the assemblage of traditions concerning Mary's clothing

2 E.g., J.-C. Larchet, *La divinisation de l'homme selon saint Maxime le Confesseur*, Cogitatio fidei 194 (Paris, 1996); idem, *Maxime le Confesseur, médiateur entre l'Orient et l'Occident*, Cogitatio fidei 208 (Paris, 1998); A. Nichols, *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (Edinburgh, 1993). The only published challenge to Maximus's authorship comes from E. M. Toniolo, "L'Akathistos nella Vita di Maria di Massimo il Confessore," in *Virgo Liber Dei: Miscellanea di studi in onore di P. Giuseppe M. Besutti, O.S.M.*, ed. I. M. Calabuig (Rome, 1991), 209–28. Yet, as I have explained in an earlier article, Toniolo's arguments are not persuasive: S. J. Shoemaker, "The Georgian Life of the Virgin Attributed to Maximus the Confessor: Its Authenticity? and Importance," in *Mémorial R.P. Michel van Esbroeck, S.J.*, ed. A. Muraviev and B. Lourié, *Scrinium* 2 (St. Petersburg, 2006), 307–28. The possibility of Maximus's authorship would also comport with Claudia Rapp's observation that the seventh century saw a number of influential Church leaders turn to composition of hagiography: C. Rapp, "Byzantine Hagiographers as Antiquarians, Seventh to Tenth Centuries," *ByzF* 21 (1995): 35.

3 Van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:VI–XXXII; S. J. Shoemaker, "The Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus and the Early Church according to the Earliest *Life of the Virgin*," *HTR* 98, no. 4 (2005): 441–67; idem, "Georgian Life of the Virgin." See also S. C. Mimouni, "Les *Vies de la Vierge*: État de la question," *Apocrypha* 5 (1994): 211–48, esp. 216–20; M. van Esbroeck, "Some Earlier Features in the Life of the Virgin," *Marianum* 63 (2001): 297–308, esp. 297–98, n. 2; M. Geerard et al., *Clavis Patrum Graecorum: Supplementum*, Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1998), 440, #7712; M. Geerard, *Clavis apocryphorum Novi Testamenti*, Corpus Christianorum (Turnhout, 1992), 71, #90.

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1 M. van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur: Vie de la Vierge*, 2 vols., CSCO 478–79, *Scriptores Iberici* 21–22 (Louvain, 1986).

relics that conclude the *Life's* narrative, although these traditions regrettably cannot resolve the question of its authorship as decisively as he has proposed. Nevertheless, the *Life's* relic traditions not only offer important confirmation of its composition in seventh-century Constantinople but also bear some of the earliest information about Constantinople's Marian relics. This coda to the Virgin's biography, which follows immediately after the account of her Dormition, is particularly remarkable for achieving some notable "firsts." It is the first document to gather together the various early traditions of Mary's relics, and moreover it is the first source to combine the Constantinopolitan traditions of Mary's relics with the narratives of her Dormition that had already been circulating in the Roman provinces for several centuries. In this section, the *Life of the Virgin* successively considers each of the three main Marian relic traditions—i.e., her funeral garments, her "robe," and her girdle—while eschewing any effort to harmonize their disparate accounts; the *Life* thus mimics the relative disorder we encounter in other early sources.

At present, however, it is somewhat difficult to assess fully the significance of this new witness, inasmuch as the precise nature of these Marian relics and their early history remain somewhat confused both in the ancient sources and in modern scholarship. Martin Jugie's early work in this area is, as will be seen, highly problematic, and Antoine Wenger's study, while quite solid, is limited to the Blachernai traditions and receives further illumination from this new text.⁴ Therefore, in order to understand fully the relic traditions of the *Life of the Virgin*, we must first sift through the often conflicted testimonies about Mary's clothing relics, in an effort to identify a new *status quaestionis* for each of the three relic traditions. Among other things, not only are the earliest sources often difficult to date, but they offer varied and vague descriptions of the Virgin's relics, a vexing problem that only compounds other difficulties in determining when and where their veneration had become established. Unfortunately, such questions prove far more difficult to answer than one would like, and surely there was a great deal more to the early veneration of these relics than our limited sources will reveal. Nevertheless, before sifting through the earliest

witnesses to each of these relic traditions, it will perhaps be helpful to present a more detailed summary of the *Life of the Virgin's* relic traditions. Thereafter, each of the three major relic traditions will be investigated in turn, comparing the evidence afforded by the *Life of the Virgin* with other early sources in order to clarify the early history of Constantinople's Marian relics.

The Relic Traditions of the Earliest *Life of the Virgin*

The Maximus *Life of the Virgin*⁵ is a virtual compendium of late ancient traditions about Mary: it chronicles the full span of her life, from her miraculous conception to her departure from this world at the Dormition, filling in the gaps between the *Protevangelium of James* and the Dormition traditions with an intriguing narrative of Mary's central role in the leadership of her son's ministry and the nascent Church.⁶ Before coming to its conclusion, however, this earliest Marian biography completes its narrative with an extraordinary collection of relic traditions, the first of its kind, it would appear. Immediately after relating the Virgin's Dormition, the *Life of the Virgin* turns to the various traditions about Mary's clothing relics; these traditions bring the narrative to a close, and then follow a hymn to the Virgin loosely based on the Akathist, a collection of theological reflections on the Dormition and Assumption, and a final hymn on the Assumption.

The *Life's* assemblage of relic traditions, standing as something of an appendix to her biography, arises almost seamlessly from the story of her Dormition through the device of a late-arriving apostle, a common feature of certain early Dormition traditions. This earliest Marian biography narrates the end of Mary's life through an intriguing and original synthesis of the two main literary traditions of the Virgin's Dormition and Assumption, the so-called "Palm" and "Bethlehem" traditions, named for certain unique features of their

4 The primary contributions of both are to be found in M. Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption de la Sainte Vierge, étude historico-doctrinale*, ST 114 (Vatican City, 1944); and A. Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T.S. Vierge dans la tradition byzantine du VIIe au Xe siècle: études et documents*, AOC 5 (Paris, 1955).

5 I use here and elsewhere in this paper the designation "the Maximus *Life of the Virgin*" without making any claims about the *Life's* authorship, but instead as shorthand for "the *Life of the Virgin* attributed to Maximus the Confessor."

6 For more on this feature, see Shoemaker, "Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus."

narratives.⁷ As this section of the *Life* comes to a close, the apostles, after placing Mary's body in the tomb, wait outside for three days, in accordance with the earliest Dormition narratives from the Palm tradition.⁸ Yet at this point the *Life* abruptly shifts sources, abandoning the Dormition apocrypha from the Palm and Bethlehem traditions that were its sources up to this point. Suddenly, without any advance warning, we learn that one of the apostles was "providentially" delayed and unable to attend Mary's funeral with his colleagues. Here the *Life* turns to the various "late-apostle" accounts from the early Dormition legends to complete its narration of Mary's departure from this life, thereby also introducing the first of its Marian relic traditions.

According to the *Life*, one of the apostles, who initially is unnamed, arrives in Jerusalem three days after Mary's burial. Ardently wishing to pay his final respects to the departed Virgin's body, he entreats the other apostles to open the tomb so that he might venerate her remains. Much to their collective surprise, when the apostles open the tomb they find it empty: Mary's body has disappeared, having been miraculously taken away by her son to some unknown place, where it has been reunited with her soul. Such specific indication of Mary's resurrection is lacking in the other late-apostle Dormition narratives, which leave her ultimate fate an unresolved mystery; in its attention to this detail, the *Life* harmonizes the Virgin's dramatic resurrection from the Palm and Bethlehem Dormition narratives with the more minimalist accounts found in the late-apostle traditions. Yet excepting only this notice of her resurrection, the *Life* here abandons the Palm and Bethlehem apocrypha and continues to relate the Virgin's death and her body's disappearance according to the late-apostle tradition, undoubtedly in order to shift the focus to her relics. After all, when the apostles reopen the tomb they do not find it completely bare: left behind were the funeral wrappings (სახუვეკელი—probably for σπάργανα)⁹ and shroud

(ტილო—for ὁθόνιον) that they had used to prepare Mary's body for burial.¹⁰

At this point the *Life*'s narrator intrudes to explain that he has also heard that this late apostle was in fact Thomas, and his delay in arriving from India was providentially designed so that he could make even more credible the miraculous transfer of Mary's body from this world into the next, just as earlier he had removed all doubts about her son's resurrection. The author gradually redirects attention away from the Virgin's death itself and to the holy wrappings (სახუვეკელი / σπάργανα) that she left behind, explaining that after her passing from this world these relics continue to sanctify the earth as she herself had in her life and burial.¹¹ Then, after conceding that Mary's blessings and miracles are manifest throughout the world, and not limited only to her relics, the *Life* turns to the relic of Mary's "garment" (სამოსელი / ἑσθής or ἱμάτιον), offering an account of how it came to reside in the imperial capital.¹²

The famous tale of Galbrios and Kandidos, a fifth-century legend explaining the transfer of these relics to Constantinople, follows immediately. The story begins by introducing Galbrios and Kandidos, two brothers from an influential Roman family who had served as generals and had recently converted from Arianism during the reign of Leo I. The brothers undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, beginning in Galilee, where one night they suddenly find themselves without a place to stay. Through the workings of Divine Providence, an elderly Jewish virgin invites them to lodge with her for the night. While eating dinner, they notice an interior room of her house filled with incense and a crowd of people suffering from a variety of illnesses. Hoping to learn the purpose of this strange room, Galbrios and Kandidos persuade their hostess to dine with them. Eventually, they ask her about the room, and although she is reluctant to answer, they press her for an explanation. After swearing the brothers to secrecy, she reveals that the room contains one of the Virgin's garments, which Mary herself had given to one of the woman's relatives shortly before her Dormition. The garment, she explains, had been placed in a small

7 For more information on the various early Dormition traditions and the nature of these literary traditions, see S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford, 2002), 25–71.

8 The following is a summary of Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 116–18 (van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 149–52 [Geor] and 101–3 [Fr]). The page numbers refer respectively to the Georgian text (Geor) and van Esbroeck's French translation (Fr).

9 The same word is used for the Virgin's funeral wrappings in Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, *Transitus Mariae* 71 and 87 (M. van Esbroeck, "L'Assomption de la Vierge dans un Transitus Pseudo-Basilien," *AB* 92 [1974]: 155, 161).

10 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 117 (van Esbroeck, ed., 150 [Geor] and 102 [Fr]).

11 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 118 (van Esbroeck, ed., 152 [Geor] and 103 [Fr]).

12 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 119 (van Esbroeck, ed., 152 [Geor] and 103 [Fr]).

coffer and passed down secretly within her family and was the source of many miracles.

Amazed at their discovery, the former Roman generals hatch a plan to steal the Virgin's garment and carry it back to Constantinople with them. They request permission to spend the night in the room housing this treasure, which its unwary owner freely grants. The brothers share the room with the many sick seeking miraculous healing from the coffer, and after the last person falls asleep, they spring into action, carefully measuring the garment's coffer and taking note of its design. In the morning they continue on toward Jerusalem to complete their pilgrimage, promising the old woman to return on their way home and offering to bring back anything that she might need. Once in Jerusalem, they employ an artisan to make an exact copy of the garment's coffer, and after spending several days in Jerusalem, they collect their replica and begin the journey home. Stopping once more to visit this rather hospitable woman, they again ask to spend the night in the presence of Mary's sacred garment. Then, when everyone else is asleep, they switch their counterfeit coffer for the one containing the garment, and in the morning after thanking their hostess and wishing her well, they set off for Constantinople with the stolen relic in hand. Once back in the imperial capital, they decide to keep the relic for themselves and secretly build a church on their estate in Blachernai to house it. Before long, however, the Virgin Mary inspires these two devout thieves to reveal the existence of her relic. Galbios and Kandidos then disclose their personal treasure to the emperor Leo, who with his wife Verina builds a magnificent church at Blachernai in honor of the Virgin and her garment, thus bringing the legend to a close.

Immediately after its account of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, the *Life of the Virgin* completes its description of Mary's relics with a short and somewhat perplexing mention of her "girdle" or "belt" (სარტყელი / ζώνη), housed at the church of Chalkoprateia in Constantinople. Of the three major relic traditions presented in the *Life*, this one is the most peculiar, both for its rather abrupt and brief appearance in the *Life* as well as for the mystery enshrouding the relic's early history in the imperial capital. Without any preamble, the *Life* suddenly introduces the girdle, explaining that it also came to Constantinople "in the same way." How the girdle relates to the legend of Galbios and Kandidos, or even if it is intended to be so linked, remains uncertain.

Although the girdle is said to protect both the city and its rulers, the *Life* unfortunately reveals nothing of its origin. Outside sources are not much help, as will be seen below, since there are surprisingly few early traditions about this relic. In fact, this passage on the girdle is very likely the earliest mention of Mary's girdle and its presence at Chalkoprateia, a feature that adds to the importance of what is already an otherwise unprecedented assemblage of Marian relic traditions in this oldest *Life of the Virgin*.

The Galbios and Kandidos Legend and the Virgin's "Garment" at Blachernai

As van Esbroeck rightly observes in the introduction to his translation, the traditions of Mary's garment at the church of Blachernai, and more specifically the literary tradition of its invention and translation, the Galbios and Kandidos legend, are particularly important for determining the provenance of the *Life of the Virgin*. Van Esbroeck concludes that the *Life's* Galbios and Kandidos legend locates its production at the opening of the seventh century and thereby secures the authenticity of its attribution to Maximus. Nevertheless, the results of van Esbroeck's analysis of the Galbios and Kandidos tradition are not nearly as definitive as he would have it appear. While he persuasively situates the *Life's* composition in seventh-century Constantinople, his claims regarding authorship overreach. Although one certainly cannot yet exclude the possibility of Maximus's authorship, comparison with the Marian traditions of early Byzantium suggests more modestly the *Life's* production in seventh-century Constantinople, probably in the first half of that century.¹³ As such, the *Life of the Virgin's* account of the Galbios and Kandidos legend offers an important early witness to the veneration of Mary's relics at her Blachernai shrine, which further clarifies the early development of traditions about this relic in late ancient Constantinople.

The early history of Mary's sacred garment in the church of Blachernai is fairly well established, thanks primarily to Antoine Wenger's seminal study of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, which corrects certain early

13 See esp. Shoemaker, "Georgian Life of the Virgin," and idem, "Virgin Mary in the Ministry of Jesus."

missteps by Martin Jugie. Jugie incorrectly maintained that the Virgin's garment first came to Blachernai only relatively late, since he followed Chrisanf Loparev in dating a key early homily on this relic to the mid-ninth century.¹⁴ This homily, which has the Galbios and Kandidos legend as its core, celebrates Constantinople's deliverance from a military assault, attributing the city's rescue to the Virgin and her garment.¹⁵ Like many scholars of his generation, Jugie identified the Russian attack on Constantinople in 860 as the homily's historical context. Ascribing the homily's authorship to George of Nikomedeia, Jugie thus concluded that Blachernai's robe was not of any significance in the imperial capital prior to the ninth century. Through a more comprehensive study of the Galbios and Kandidos traditions, Wenger has corrected these early mistakes.

By undertaking a careful analysis of this homily's references to the immediate circumstances of its composition, Wenger convincingly identifies the homily as a response to the Avar attacks of 619, composed by a certain Theodore Synkellos, a high church official in Constantinople at that time.¹⁶ Moreover, Wenger argues that Theodore's homily served as the primary source for

two very similar accounts of the Galbios and Kandidos story appearing in Symeon Metaphrastes' tenth-century *Life of the Virgin*¹⁷ and in the eleventh-century imperial menologion A;¹⁸ he collectively names these three narratives the "type B" form of the legend. He successfully demonstrates the existence of this legend (and presumably its relic) in Constantinople by the beginning of the seventh century at the latest. Wenger also identifies several other early witnesses to a rather different recension of this legend, which he names "type A." Through careful comparison of the two versions, he demonstrates that the "type A" narrative was clearly the source of the "type B" narrative. He concludes that the former probably originated in Constantinople at the close of the fifth century. Thus Wenger establishes that the veneration of Mary's garment, identified in the Galbios and Kandidos legend as an ἐσθής and a περιβολή/περιβόλαιον (garment), was already well established in Constantinople by the opening of the sixth century.¹⁹ He attributes the creation of the "type B" narrative to Theodore Synkellos, who he believed had used the older "type A" narrative as the basis for his homily; new evidence from the Maximus *Life of the Virgin* suggests, however, that the "type B" narrative almost certainly predates Theodore's homily. The version of the Galbios and Kandidos legend in Theodore's homily is not his own composition but almost certainly is taken from an earlier source.

The Galbios and Kandidos legend in the Georgian *Life of the Virgin* alters Wenger's analysis slightly by adding a fourth version of the "type B" narrative that is strikingly similar to the accounts in Symeon Metaphrastes' *Life of the Virgin* and the imperial menologion A, an affinity that we now know is consequent upon their direct dependence on this earliest *Life of the Virgin*.²⁰ The Georgian *Life's* relations with Theodore Synkellos's version of the legend, however, are considerably more complex but also more revealing. Inasmuch as Theodore's homily is a

14 Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption* (n. 4 above), 690–91; C. Loparev, "Staroe svidetel'stvo o Polozhenii rizy Bogoroditsy vo Vlachernakh v novum istolkovanii primenitel'no k nashestvii Russkikh na Vizantii v 860 godu," *VizVrem* 2 (1895): 612–28. Rather astonishingly, J. Wortley, "The Marian Relics at Constantinople," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 45 (2005): 171–87, returns to Jugie's view, without much justification and seeming to ignore the work by Wenger and others that has disproved this older view. While Wortley's article offers a useful survey of some middle Byzantine sources relevant to Constantinople's Marian relics, his neglect of Wenger's important study of the Galbios and Kandidos legend (see his remark at 177 n. 20) in particular compromises the value of his conclusions regarding the early history of these relics.

15 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (F. Combefis, ed., *Historia haeresis Monothelitarum: Sanctaeque in eam sextae synodi actorum vindiciae, diversorum item antiqua, ac medii aevi, tum historiae sacrae, tum dogmatica, graeca opuscula*, Graeco-Latine Patrum Bibliothecae novum auctarium 2 [Paris, 1648], cols. 751–88). The section of the homily that follows the Galbios and Kandidos legend, which treats the Avar attack, has been published in a better edition by Loparev, "Staroe svidetel'stvo o Polozhenii." A translation of this section has been published in Av. Cameron, "The Virgin's Robe: An Episode in the History of Early Seventh-Century Constantinople," *Byzantion* 49 (1979): 42–56.

16 See the discussion in Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 4 above), 114–27. For the date of the Avar attack I follow here Cameron, "Virgin's Robe," esp. 43 n. 7; and *ODB* s.v. "Theodore Synkellos," 3:2048. Mango, however, maintains that 623 is the correct date for these raids: C. Mango, "The Origins of the Blachernae Shrine at Constantinople," in *Acta XIII Congressus Internationalis Archaeologicae Christianae: Split–Poreč*, ed. N. Cambi and E. Marin (Vatican City, 1998), 2:67–68.

17 Symeon Metaphrastes, *Life of the Virgin* (B. Lатышев, ed., *Menologii anonymi byzantini saeculi X quae supersunt*, 2 vols. [Saint Petersburg, 1912], 2:345–82).

18 Ibid., 2:127–32.

19 Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 127–36.

20 Van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:XIX–XXIX. In light of this recognition, some of Wenger's analysis of the history of the "type B" narrative will need to be rethought, inasmuch as he assumes Theodore was Symeon's source. Symeon's redaction of the "type B" narrative is much easier to understand once it is recognized that the Maximus *Life of the Virgin* was his source. See Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 125–27.

rather precisely dated text, having been composed shortly after the Avar attacks on Constantinople in 619, comparison with the *Life of the Virgin* holds much promise, as van Esbroeck himself was the first to recognize. The two texts show clear evidence of literary relations, and in a rather hastily presented analysis van Esbroeck attempts to determine which version served as the other's source. He provides a single but very revealing comparison of the two texts as they similarly describe Mary's use of her garment at the Nativity as "swaddling clothes," in which she wrapped and then nursed her newborn son.²¹ On the basis of this comparison, van Esbroeck argues that the *Life* cannot depend on Theodore's homily, and he also identifies several further indications of the *Life*'s independence, including allusions in Theodore's homily to the recent victory over the Avars, as well as a number of theological and biblical excursuses in his homily that appear to be insertions. Although van Esbroeck fails to give specific examples of the latter, comparison of the *Life* with Theodore's homily shows that in several places Theodore has modified a more primitive version of the Galbrios and Kandidos narrative witnessed by the *Life of the Virgin*.

For instance, van Esbroeck's comparison of the "swaddling clothes" tradition holds far more significance than his all too limited discussion reveals. What van Esbroeck does not make entirely clear is that the passages he compares are drawn from very different locations in their respective texts. The excerpt from the *Life of the Virgin* is taken from its Galbrios and Kandidos narrative, whereas the equivalent passage from Theodore's homily comes from a later section in his text dealing specifically with the role of the Virgin's garment in the Avar raids of 619. The passage from the *Life of the Virgin* concludes its account of the relic's translation with the final remarks that not only did this sacred garment clothe Mary's immaculate and incorruptible body, but when Christ was born from her, she wrapped him in the very same garment and nursed him in it. The *Life*'s author further specifies that "this is the reason why the holy garment of the immaculate and entirely praiseworthy Theotokos remains incorruptible from then until now":

21 Van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, XXVII–XXVIII (Fr); comparing Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 12.4 (van Esbroeck, ed., 160 [Geor] and 109 [Fr]) and Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., *Historia haeresis Monothelitarum*, 782A; Loparev, "Staroe svidetel'stvo o Polozhenii," 605–6; trans. Cameron, "Virgin's Robe," 53–54).

because Mary had "swaddled" her son in this garment and began to nurse him in it immediately after his birth.²²

Theodore's homily, on the other hand, has a similar passage at the conclusion of its Galbrios and Kandidos narrative, but Theodore omits the final details, the link between the garment's incorruptibility and its use as swaddling clothes for the newborn Christ.²³ Instead, Theodore raises these points later in his homily, in a passage concerned with events of the recent Avar raids, and it is this passage that van Esbroeck uses to draw his comparison with the *Life of the Virgin*. According to this section of Theodore's homily, several men were sent out in advance of the Avar attacks to retrieve from the church of Blachernai the sacred treasures, including the Virgin's garment, which was kept in a small "coffer," a *σποός*. Curiosity overcame the men who were dispatched, and they opened the coffer; finding within a purple cloth, they assumed this to be Mary's garment and cut off a small piece to keep for themselves. Then, after the raids, when the patriarch returned the relic to Blachernai, he opened its vessel himself. Inside he discovered that the purple cloth, which over the centuries had become quite worn and damaged, was not in fact the Virgin's garment. Rather, this fabric had been wrapped around Mary's actual clothing, a woolen garment which, despite wool's greater perishability, remained completely intact and unblemished. The garment's miraculous preservation here is ascribed, as in the *Life of the Virgin*, to the fact that "in it she actually wrapped the Word of God Himself when he was a very little child and gave him milk. Because of this, this divine and truly royal garment rightly is not only the cure for every illness but rightly is incorruptible and indestructible."²⁴

Both Theodore's homily and the *Life* share a tradition that Mary's garment remained incorruptible because she had used it to swaddle and nurse Christ at his birth. But Theodore's homily does not mention the garment's incorruptibility at the conclusion of the Galbrios and Kandidos narrative, where it appears in the *Life*. Instead, Theodore links this tradition with the events of the recent Avar attacks and uses it to explain the garment's incorruption,

22 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 12.4 (van Esbroeck, ed., 160 [Geor] and 109 [Fr]).

23 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., 771D).

24 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., 782A; Loparev, "Staroe svidetel'stvo o Polozhenii," 605–6; trans. Cameron, "Virgin's Robe," 53–54 [slightly modified]).

revealed when Patriarch Sergios opened its coffer. Thus it would appear that Theodore has removed this tradition from its original context at the conclusion of the Galbios and Kandidos story (where it makes perfect sense) and repositioned it to elucidate contemporary events, using it to explain the patriarch's discovery of a perfectly preserved woolen garment. Theodore's apparent modification of the "type B" narrative attested by the *Life of the Virgin* to interpret current events makes it highly unlikely that his homily served as the *Life's* source.

Another revealing point of comparison occurs when the elderly Jewish woman finally reveals the true nature of the relic in her possession: in Theodore's version, she explains that the garment has been passed down successively within her family through a line of virgin women.²⁵ Consequently, when Galbios and Kandidos are about to perpetrate their pious larceny, they are terrified that they, being neither women nor virgins, might incur divine wrath by laying their hands on such a sacred object. They recall the example of Uzzah, who died on the spot when he dared touch the ark of God merely to prevent it from falling to the ground (2 Sam 6.6–7), and so they pray to the Virgin to protect them as they prepare to remove the "ark" containing her garment.²⁶ The same story appears almost identically in the *Life of the Virgin*, only without any indication that virgins alone could handle the box: in the *Life's* version, the men are concerned only with their numerous sins.²⁷ It is hard to imagine that someone writing a *Life of the Virgin* would remove such a detail, which dramatically heightens the status of celibate women. Although this is admittedly a rather small point, the accretion of similar differences arising from sustained comparison betrays a consistent pattern revealing that Theodore's homily presents a modified version of the "type B" narrative.²⁸ Thus, Theodore's quotation from the *Iliad*, which Wenger assumed Symeon Metaphrastes had eliminated, can now be seen instead as Theodore's embellishment of an earlier source, which

Symeon, whose narrative depends on the Maximus *Life of the Virgin*, would not have known.²⁹ For such reasons, van Esbroeck is right to conclude that it is highly unlikely ("impensable") that Theodore's homily was the source for the *Life of the Virgin*.

Yet on this basis van Esbroeck presses further, asserting that "Il reste alors une seule solution: c'est que Théodore, et son récit pieux de la translation, dépende de Maxime," that is, on the *Life of the Virgin*, a conclusion that is fundamental to van Esbroeck's argument for Maximus's authorship.³⁰ Clearly, however, this is not the *only* possible solution. In fact, it is more likely that, independently, both Theodore and the *Life* have drawn on a single earlier account of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, which both reproduce with remarkable fidelity. The alternative, that one author has himself written a new version of the Galbios and Kandidos story and the other has copied it, is highly improbable. It seems unlikely that either author would have felt the need to compose a new version of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, and it is far easier to account for the literary relationships between these two texts as reflecting independent uses of an already existing narrative, which both authors have incorporated into their respective compositions.

Theodore's homily, for example, is concerned primarily with celebrating the recent victory over the Avars and the role of the Virgin's garment therein. The Galbios and Kandidos legend is thus supplementary to the main purpose of his homily, and it serves primarily as background material giving broader context to Theodore's eyewitness account of the sacred garment's recent history. Given these priorities, it is somewhat doubtful that Theodore would have bothered to produce a new version of the legend just for the occasion, particularly since we know that by this time independent accounts of this story already were in circulation, as Wenger's "type A" narrative demonstrates.³¹ Furthermore, comparison of Theodore's Galbios and Kandidos legend with the *Life's* version shows that Theodore has modified aspects of the story to suit the occasion of his homily, and so Theodore must depend either on the *Life* or on a third, independent

25 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., 763E).

26 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., 767B–E).

27 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 123 (van Esbroeck, ed., 158 [Geor] and 107 [Fr]).

28 Compare, for instance, Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 119–23 (van Esbroeck, ed., 153–59 [Geor] and 104–8 [Fr]) with Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., 758C–E, 759C–D, 763A–B, and 770B–D).

29 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin's Robe* (Combefis, ed., 762C); Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 4 above), 126–27.

30 Van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, XXVIII (Fr).

31 See Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 127–36; S. C. Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*, Théologie Historique 98 (Paris, 1995), 604–17. The earliest version of this narrative has been published in Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 294–303.

account that was their common source. As for the *Life*, its author openly acknowledges extensive use of earlier sources, among which apparently was the “type B” Galbios and Kandidos legend. Consequently, it is highly unlikely that either Theodore or the *Life*’s author is responsible for the “type B” Galbios and Kandidos story. Theodore’s version clearly was not the *Life*’s source, and his homily shows no evidence of dependence on the *Life*. Presumably then, there was already, by the beginning of the seventh century, an early version of the “type B” narrative that both authors independently incorporated into their compositions. Their mutual dependence on this otherwise unattested source strongly suggests the production of these two texts within closely related milieux. In any case, there is certainly no need to assume that one author must depend on the other, as van Esbroeck seems to insist. Common use of a shared source presents a more plausible explanation for the literary relations of these two seventh-century texts.

Turning momentarily to the origins of the church at Blachernai, which housed this relic, it is uncertain exactly when and by whom the church was founded. The Galbios and Kandidos legends would have us believe that the church was initially built by these two pious scoundrels and then expanded by Leo and Verina. Several sources, however, including Theodore the Lector’s early sixth-century *Ecclesiastical History* (which survives only in fragments), ascribe the church’s foundation to the Empress Pulcheria (399–453), and most scholars have followed these reports in placing Pulcheria in this role.³² Nevertheless, Cyril Mango has recently proposed that the Empress Verina, rather than Pulcheria, is rightly identified as founder of the Blachernai church, as well as of the church of Chalkoprateia discussed below.³³ Given Pulcheria’s traditional association with the

Theotokos, it is easy to imagine how pious memory may have wrongly remembered her as the founder of these two Marian shrines.³⁴

Yet Mango’s case for Verina’s sponsorship is not quite as strong as he suggests. In sum, all that he can muster in Verina’s favor are two somewhat inconclusive points. First, he identifies what he regards as “a special connection” between Verina and the already existing shrine during the tumultuous years 475–78: in 475 she sought refuge at Blachernai and her daughter helped their relative Basiliscus join the clergy there after he was deposed. Second, Mango observes that according to the earliest version of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, Leo and Verina made additions to an already existing church at Blachernai, including a mosaic depicting themselves, and they dedicated the church to the Virgin.³⁵ Interestingly enough, in both cases the church at Blachernai is explicitly described as preexisting Verina’s activities there, which I hardly think can identify her with the shrine’s founder, as Mango proposes. While these reports certainly do not entirely exclude this possibility, neither do they eliminate Pulcheria, whose claim they could in fact seem to

32 Theodore the Lector, *Ecclesiastical History* 367 (G. C. Hansen, *Theodoros Anagnostes Kirchengeschichte*, 2nd ed., GCS, n.F., Bd. 3 [Berlin, 1995], 102); note that the “Euthymiac History,” which is discussed below, also reports this. See, e.g., R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l’Empire byzantin*, part 1, *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, volume 3, *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), 161–71; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 620; M. van Esbroeck, “Le culte de la Vierge de Jérusalem à Constantinople aux 6e–7e siècles,” *REB* 46 (1988): 181–90; A. W. Carr, “Threads of Authority: The Virgin Mary’s Veil in the Middle Ages,” in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. S. Gordon (New York, 2001), 62–64.

33 Mango, “Origins of the Blachernae Shrine” (n. 16 above); C. Mango, “Constantinople as Theotokopolis,” in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. Maria Vassilaki (Milan, 2000), 17–25.

34 Kenneth Holum has proposed that Pulcheria was an ardent devotee of the Virgin Mary, had modeled her own authority after the Virgin, actively promoted Mary’s veneration in Constantinople, and also played a central role in the Nestorian controversy: K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1982), esp. 147–74. This theory was further advanced and developed in V. Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London, 1994), 53–61. Recently, however, this interpretation has come under severe criticism, as several scholars have pointed out that many of the key sources are both rather late and polemical in nature: see C. Angelidi, *Pulcheria: La castità al potere (c. 399–c. 455)*, *Donne d’Oriente e d’Occidente* 5 (Milan, 1998); R. M. Price, “Marian Piety and the Nestorian Controversy,” in *The Church and Mary*, ed. R. N. Swanson, *Studies in Church History* 39 (Suffolk, 2004), 31–38; Av. Cameron, “The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Development and Myth-Making,” in *The Church and Mary*, ed. Swanson, 1–21, 9–11; and L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 35 (Leiden, 2001), e.g., 51 n. 10, 57 n. 53. Kate Cooper, however, has attempted to argue that the evidence for Pulcheria’s devotion to the Virgin can withstand even such scrutiny: K. Cooper, “Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins, and Pulcheria’s *imitatio Mariae*,” *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 19 (1998): 31–43; eadem, “Empress and *Theotokos*: Gender and Patronage in the Christological Controversy,” in *The Church and Mary* (cited above), 39–51. Yet whether Pulcheria was instrumental in the events of the Nestorian controversy or not, her reputation as such in later sources could certainly underlie the attribution of these church foundations to her.

35 Note, however, that the text does not, as I understand it, report Leo and Verina’s construction of a church at Blachernai, as Mango suggests: Mango, “Origins of the Blachernae Shrine,” 72.

support, if we take seriously the indications of both reports that the Blachernai church predated Verina. In any case, there seems to be little doubt that the church of Mary at Blachernai was built under imperial patronage during the second half of the fifth century, a period corresponding with the emergence of the Galbios and Kandidos legend and its celebration of the shrine's important Marian relic.

The Virgin's Girdle and Christ's Swaddling Clothes: The Relics of Chalkoprateia

At the conclusion of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, the *Life of the Virgin* suddenly turns to the relic of the Virgin's girdle, which it introduces with the following brief and somewhat cryptic description.

In this way the immaculate mother of Christ also gave to the same city her holy girdle, which encircled the body that contained the uncontainable, the king of all things. And for this a beautiful church was also built by the faithful emperors to the glory of the holy Theotokos, which is called Chalkoprateia. And there her incorruptible girdle is kept, as the city's crown of grace and its wall of steadfast faith, and the source of victory for the God-serving emperors.³⁶

This rather abrupt and terse passage, attesting the importance of this sacred relic as a supernatural guardian of the imperial capital already by the seventh century, appears to be the earliest witness to the veneration of Mary's girdle at the church of Chalkoprateia. Yet it is surprising that the *Life* has so little to say about the relic, particularly after its extensive account of the discovery and transfer of the Virgin's garment to Blachernai. The *Life's* report that Mary's girdle came to Constantinople "in this way" (ἔσθῃ) is particularly perplexing: does this phrase refer back to the Galbios and Kandidos legend? Are we to assume that Galbios and Kandidos also brought Mary's girdle to Constantinople? Or rather that its translation was in some way similarly miraculous? Unfortunately, the

Life offers almost no context to help resolve this enigma: this short passage brings the *Life's* narrative to a close, and thus the girdle's origin and its relation to Blachernai's "garment" remain mysterious.

No less problematic is the history of the relic itself, whose existence is not otherwise attested before the early eighth century. Unlike the "garment" (ἔσθῃς) of Blachernai, whose history in the imperial capital is well documented from the end of the fifth century, the origins of Mary's girdle (ζώνη) remain somewhat uncertain. Excepting the Georgian *Life*, the earliest secure witness to the girdle's presence in Constantinople is a homily *On Mary's Girdle* delivered by Patriarch Germanos I (715–730) at the church of Chalkoprateia.³⁷ Unlike the Galbios and Kandidos legend, Germanos's homily is not an account of the girdle's invention and translation but a celebration of Chalkoprateia's most famous relic on the feast of the church's dedication. Nevertheless, Germanos speaks of the relic in terms suggesting that by this time the girdle was already a well-established and revered presence in the city. Among other things, he describes the girdle as "encircling and embracing its city, protecting it unassailably from barbarian attack," and he refers directly to earlier traditions about the girdle, presumably written ones.³⁸ Thus Germanos's homily bears witness

37 PG 98:372D–384A. See Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption* (n. 31 above), 626; Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* (n. 32 above), 238–39; V. Fazzo, *Germano di Costantinopoli: Omelie mariologiche (le omelie mariane e le lettere sulle sacre immagini)*, Collana di testi patristici 49 (Rome, 1985), 139 n. 18; G. Pons Pons, *Germán de Constantinopla: Homilias Mariológicas*, Biblioteca de patristica 13 (Madrid, 1991), 143 n. 14. This location also seems to be assumed by Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokopolis" (n. 33 above), 19, and by N. H. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople," in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), 248–60, at 258. For some peculiar reason, Jugie identifies Blachernai as the location for this homily, as does Annemarie Weyl Carr: Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption* (n. 4 above), 698; Carr, "Threads of Authority" (n. 32 above), 82 n. 21. Note also that Carr's identification of the anonymous work *Τίς ὁ φαιδρὸς σύλλογος οὗτος* as a homily delivered by Andrew of Crete in the Blachernai church at the beginning of the eighth century is quite misleading. This work, which describes the invention and deposition of the girdle, has been published in Combefis, *Historia haeresis Monothelitarum* (n. 15 above), 789–804, and should be regarded as anonymous according to Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 4 above), 113, n. 2, and also according to Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption* (n. 31 above), 625–26. At present, its date appears equally uncertain.

38 Germanos of Constantinople, *Homily on Mary's Girdle* (PG 98:377B–C): Ὁ ζώνη φαιδρά, ἡ τῆς τοῦ ἀφθάρτου Θεοῦ Μητρὸς τὸ ὑπέρσεμον σῶμα σεμνοπρεπῶς προσεγγίσασα, κάκειθεν τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν ἀμφιασμένη, ἀπαρασάλευτος καὶ ἀφθαρτος μένουσα, ὡς εἰς ἡμᾶς τις λόγος τῆς ἀληθείας κατελήλυθεν. See also Fazzo, *Germano di Costantinopoli*, 140 n. 22; Pons Pons, *Germán de Constantinopla*, 145 n. 22.

36 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 12.4 (van Esbroeck, ed., 160–61 [Geor] and 109 [Fr]).

to a cult focused on this relic that was already thriving by the beginning of the eighth century.³⁹

Numerous later sources in fact suggest that the relic's veneration began considerably earlier than Germanos's homily, although their data are often contradictory and in some cases demonstrably inaccurate. For instance, several middle Byzantine sources describe the girdle's deposition under the Emperor Arcadius (395–408) and allege the discovery of an inscription in the ninth century attesting this fact.⁴⁰ Yet this tradition is almost certainly a pious fiction, designed to raise the girdle's status in comparison with Blachernai's garment by establishing its presence in the city even earlier, and an inscription was presumably "discovered" for the occasion to enhance the story's credibility.⁴¹ By all accounts, the church of Chalkoprateia was itself established only later in the fifth century, by Pulcheria or Verina, making it rather difficult to believe that the relic was already in place more than half a century earlier.⁴²

39 By way of comparison, Germanos's homilies on the Virgin's Dormition provide the earliest reliable evidence for the commemoration of the feast of the Dormition in the imperial capital. Yet surely this celebration, already well established throughout the provinces a century beforehand, was observed in Constantinople before Germanos's reign as patriarch. See, e.g., Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions* (n. 7 above), 78–141; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 353–584.

40 These include: a homily by the future patriarch Euthymios, delivered most likely for the feast of Mary's girdle in 888 (M. Jugie, *Homélies mariales byzantines: textes grecs*, 2 vols., PO 16.3, 19.3 [Paris, 1922 & 1926], 1:505–14); the Menologion of Basil II (963–1025) (PG 117:613A–C); and the tenth-century Synaxarion of Constantinople (H. Delehay, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi* [Brussels, 1902], 935). A separate tradition in the Synaxarion describes the girdle's deposition at the church of Chalkoprateia in 942 (*ibid.*, 600). Yet this is clearly impossible, unless, as Mango suggests, this involves the deposition of a second girdle: Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokopolis" (n. 33 above), 19.

41 Mango, "Origins of the Blachernae Shrine" (n. 16 above), 65–66; Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokopolis," 19. See also Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* (n. 32 above), 237–39. Nevertheless, according to these accounts, the inscription was linked with the σποός containing the girdle, not with the church itself. Thus it is not entirely impossible, although extremely unlikely, that the relic has some connection with Arcadius.

42 As with the church at Blachernai, Mango again favors Verina over Pulcheria, on the basis of Justinian, *Novellae* 3.1 (P. Krueger et al., eds., *Corpus iuris civilis*, 3 vols. [Berlin, 1954], 3:20), which identifies Verina as the founder of the Chalkoprateia church (Mango, "Origins of the Blachernae Shrine," 65–66). Nevertheless, most scholars identify Pulcheria as its founder, while supposing that Verina oversaw its completion: T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park, PA, 1971), 28; Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 237; W. Lackner, "Ein byzantinisches Marienmirakel," *Byzantina* 13 (1985): 843–44. The Chronicle of Theophanes identifies

With or without this important relic, the Chalkoprateia church quickly established its reputation as one of Constantinople's most revered Marian shrines, second only to her church at Blachernai. By the sixth century, regular liturgical processions in honor of Mary marched through the streets of Constantinople between Blachernai and Chalkoprateia. According to the fourteenth-century *Ecclesiastical History* of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, Pulcheria established these weekly processions on Wednesdays.⁴³ Nevertheless, it is rather doubtful that Pulcheria initiated these weekly Marian celebrations: even if she was responsible for building both churches, as Nikephoros and many other sources report, it seems unlikely that these processions would have been established so shortly after the construction of the churches. A more credible report comes from Theodore the Lector, whose early sixth-century *Ecclesiastical History* credits Patriarch Timothy I (511–518) with introducing weekly processions from the Chalkoprateia shrine on Fridays, although he makes no mention of Blachernai.⁴⁴ By the last quarter of the sixth century, however, weekly processions between these two Marian shrines on Fridays were a regular feature of Constantinople's religious life, as attested by several sources that link the emperor Maurice (582–602) with these processions.⁴⁵

These liturgical practices attest not only the considerable importance of the Chalkoprateia shrine already by the early sixth century but also a symbolic connection between these two Marian churches; both of these factors suggest the presence of a significant Marian relic at

Pulcheria as the founder: C. de Boor, ed., *Theophanis chronographia*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim, 1963), 1:102, 105. A passage in Theodore the Lector also identifies Pulcheria as Chalkoprateia's founder, but this is widely regarded as an interpolation: Hansen, *Theodoros Anagnostes* (n. 32 above), 102, no. 363. A good discussion of this passage's status can be found in B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), 120.

43 Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos, *Ecclesiastical History* 14 (PG 147:1061).

44 Theodore the Lector, *Ecclesiastical History* 494 (Hansen, *Theodoros Anagnostes*, 140). Janin mistakenly reports that Theodore also mentions Blachernai in this passage, although he does not: Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique*, 167.

45 Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiae* 8.5 (C. de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae* [Leipzig, 1887], 291–92); Theophanes, *Chronographia* (de Boor, ed., *Theophanis chronographia*, 1:265–66); George Kedrenos, *Compendium Historiarum* (I. Bekker, ed., *Georgius Cedrenus [et] Ioannis Scylitzae ope*, 2 vols., CSHB 34–35 [Bonn, 1838], 1:694). On these processions, see also Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, esp. 12, 107, 145; and van Esbroeck, "Culte de la Vierge" (n. 32 above).

Chalkoprateia. Indeed, one would imagine that once this ritual yoke had been established it was not very long before Chalkoprateia obtained a relic of its own to rival Blachernai's garment, if in fact it did not already possess such an item. According to the Synaxarion of Constantinople, Chalkoprateia acquired the Virgin's girdle during the reign of Justinian (527–565), which seems a very likely possibility.⁴⁶ The *Patria*, a late tenth-century collection of stories about the history of Constantinople and its monuments, adds a measure of credibility to the Synaxarion's report.⁴⁷ According to the *Patria*, Justin II (565–578) and his wife Sophia built the holy *σορός* (a chapel for the girdle relic) at Chalkoprateia and rebuilt its sanctuary, which had been damaged by an earthquake: at this time Chalkoprateia was said to house both the Virgin's girdle (*ζώνη*) and her "garment" (*ἔσθής*), but not her "robe" or "veil" (*ῥομφόριον* [= *μαφόριον*]), which was then at the church of Blachernai.⁴⁸ This report appears to be a rather sober testimony, and it bears no obvious agenda: it is difficult to conceive of a motive for inventing such a tradition from whole cloth. Even the distribution of relics—both girdle and garment in Chalkoprateia's possession—is not as peculiar as it might seem at first glance.

The truth of the matter is that for several centuries the early Byzantine sources evidence remarkable diversity and fluidity in their descriptions of Constantinople's Marian relics. The legend of Galbios and Kandidos, for instance, ensures that some sort of "garb," an *ἔσθής*, was venerated at Blachernai from the end of the fifth century, but the precise nature of this apparel remains stubbornly vague and even somewhat confused for several centuries. Only relatively later does this relic come to be identified specifically with Mary's *μαφόριον* or "robe." As Jugie observed, the term *μαφόριον* (or *ῥομφόριον*) is not used to describe this garment until the tenth century: prior to

this time, more generic terms, such as *ἔσθής* and *ἱμάτιον*, were used for Blachernai's sacred garment.⁴⁹ Moreover, there is strong evidence that by the beginning of the eighth century two different items of Mary's clothing had come to reside at Chalkoprateia, her girdle and Christ's "swaddling clothes." As seen already from the Galbios and Kandidos legend, "swaddling clothes" could readily be identified with Mary's *ἔσθής* or "garment," and a rare instance of intertextuality between this legend and the early Dormition traditions suggests the possibility that Chalkoprateia possessed a second, similar garment that had once belonged to the Virgin.

According to the earliest version of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, Wenger's type A, the garment stolen by the two brothers, described both as an *ἔσθής* and as a *περιβόλαιον*, had been passed down within the old woman's family for generations. As this legend explains, the Virgin herself, just before her Dormition, bequeathed the garment to one of the old woman's relatives, who had been one of Mary's servants.⁵⁰ As scholars of early Marian piety have long noted, this tradition of the garment's origin almost certainly derives from a passage in the earliest Dormition narratives, which date to the fourth century if not perhaps even earlier.⁵¹ Before the other apostles arrive, Mary shows John all of her worldly possessions,

49 Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption* (n. 4 above), 693–94. Carr, "Threads of Authority" (n. 32 above), 63, affirms Jugie's assessment. See also the discussion below and C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, DOS 3 (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 76–77. In light of this rather late usage of *μαφόριον*, Mango, "Origins of the Blachernae Shrine" (n. 16 above), is far too free in his use of this term to describe the garment prior to the tenth century: it is very questionable whether it was identified as such at this time. No doubt he draws justification from a passage in the *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* that speaks of the hem of the *μαφόριον* being donated to a monastery as a relic: *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* 128.12 (A. J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, 2 vols. [Brussels, 1970], 1:102 and 2:105). Jugie regarded this passage as an interpolation, largely on the basis of its use of *μαφόριον*. This reference from the *Life of Theodore* is also anomalous in that traditions of the Virgin's garment appear to have been limited mainly to Constantinople at this time: this passage would be the first evidence for the circulation of this Constantinopolitan tradition in the provinces, preceding other such witnesses by several centuries. Outside of Constantinople, the Virgin's funeral garments seem to have been the center of attention, as seen below. All of this strongly favors the possibility of an interpolation; even if the passage itself is authentic, the word *μαφόριον* may be a later interpretation. In any case, it does not provide evidence for the use of this term in Constantinople prior to the tenth century.

50 Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 296–97.

51 Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 691, n. 1; Wenger, *L'Assomption* (both n. 4 above), 129–30. Regarding the date of the early Palm traditions, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions* (n. 7 above), 32–46, 205–79.

46 Delehay, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (n. 40 above), 935–96. Dirk Krausmüller's paper "Making the Most of Mary: The Chalkoprateia in the Tenth Century," delivered at the conference "The Mother of God in Byzantium: Relics, Icons, and Texts" at Oxford University (17 and 18 August 2006), reaches a similar conclusion. This paper will appear in the published proceedings of the conference.

47 For more on the *Patria* and its nature, see A. Berger, *Untersuchungen zu den Patria Konstantinupoleos*, Poikila Byzantina 8 (Bonn, 1988), and esp. 187–96 regarding the date; G. Dagron, *Constantinople imaginaire: Études sur le recueil des Patria*, Bibliothèque byzantine, Études 8 (Paris, 1984).

48 T. Preger, *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1901–7), 2:226–27, 263; PG 157:560A–B, 593B.

which include only her funeral garment (κηδεῖαν) and two “tunics” (χιτῶνας), and she instructs him that after her death the two tunics should be given to each of two widows living with her.⁵² Thus, according to this intertextual reference, the relic that Galbios and Kandidos brought to Constantinople and placed in a church on their Blachernai estate was originally one of a pair, which shared company also with the funeral garments in which the Virgin was buried. This is an important early clue that one might expect to encounter several different items of clothing once belonging to the Virgin.

By the turn of the seventh century, the “type B” version of the Galbios and Kandidos legend had come into circulation.⁵³ This narrative, used independently by both Theodore Synkellos and the *Life of the Virgin*’s author, adds greater clarity on a number of points, including the origin of the Virgin’s garment (ἑσθῆς). In this revision, the old woman explains that Mary, just before her death, gave two of her garments (ἱμάτια) to two pious virgins, making the linkage with the episode from the early Dormition traditions even more clear.⁵⁴ Moreover, as already noted above, this revision of the Galbios and Kandidos legend inserts the tradition that Mary had used this garment for “swaddling clothes,” wrapping her newborn son in it as she nursed him, which was the reason why it remained uncorrupted still in the seventh century.⁵⁵ In the process, the Virgin’s garment became stained with drops of her breast milk. Although this particular point seems to have fallen out of the Georgian *Life of the Virgin*, its presence in the original Greek version of this *Life* is assured by the inclusion of this detail

in the tenth-century *Lives of the Virgin* by John Geometres and Symeon Metaphrastes, both of which depend directly on this primitive Marian biography.⁵⁶ Thus, by the opening of the seventh century, the “type B” narrative of the Galbios and Kandidos legend identifies this stolen garment with an item of Mary’s clothing that she used to swaddle her infant son, a garment that still bore the stains of Mary’s life-giving milk. Already at this early stage, the nature of Blachernai’s relic had begun to shift and even to merge with various other sacred textiles in the pious traditions of Constantinople.

From this point on things become rather messy, and confusion about the nature of Mary’s relics takes hold of our sources for several centuries. As Annemarie Weyl Carr observes, between the sixth and ninth centuries various sources offer different and often contradictory descriptions of what she aptly characterizes as a “veritable laundry chute of Marian garments” in the churches of Constantinople.⁵⁷ In this period, sometime before the turn of the eighth century, the Virgin’s girdle joined her garment in what was fast becoming a Theotokopolis, as Theodore Synkellos names the imperial capital.⁵⁸ As already noted, the first indisputable evidence of the girdle’s presence in Constantinople comes only from Patriarch Germanos’s early eighth-century homily *On Mary’s Girdle*, although Germanos describes the relic in terms clearly indicating that its veneration was already well established by that time. In a remark reminiscent of the Galbios and Kandidos legend, Germanos notes that even in his day the girdle still bore visible drops of Mary’s immaculate breast milk.⁵⁹ But no sooner does Germanos begin to praise Mary’s girdle than he suddenly catches

52 Wenger, *L’Assomption*, 222–23; See also the *Book of Mary’s Repose* 44 (the Ethiopic *Liber Requiei*), where the recipients are identified as “poor women”: V. Arras, *De transitu Mariae apocrypha aethiopice*, 2 vols., CSCO 342–43, 351–52 (Louvain, 1973), 1:27 (Eth) and 18 (Lat); English trans. in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 316–17.

53 Other sources from around the same time that mention this garment are: as μαφόριον, *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* 128.12 (Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, 1:102 and 2:105); as περιστόλια, Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiae* 8.5 (de Boor, *Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae*, 291–92); and as ἑσθῆς, an early Kontakion on the Holy Fathers: P. Maas, *Frühbyzantinische Kirchenpoesie*, 2nd ed., Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen 52/53 (Berlin, 1931), 31, strophe 15. Regarding the date of the latter, see Mango, “Origins of the Blachernae Shrine,” 69 n. 37.

54 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin’s Robe* (Combefis, ed., 763D–E); Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* (van Esbroeck, ed., 156 [Geor] and 106 [Fr]).

55 Theodore Synkellos, *Homily on the Virgin’s Robe* (Combefis, ed., 771D–E); Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* (van Esbroeck, ed., 160 [Geor] and 109 [Fr]).

56 See John Geometres, *Life of the Virgin* 43 (Wenger, *L’Assomption*, 394–95); and Symeon Metaphrastes, *Life of the Virgin* 53 (Latyšev, ed., *Menologii anonymi byzantini*, 2:383). Regarding the dependence of these two vitae on the Maximus *Life*, see van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, XIX–XXIX (Fr); and Shoemaker, “Georgian Life of the Virgin” (n. 2 above). The widespread success of Symeon’s metaphor of this earlier *Life of the Virgin* no doubt explains why its Greek original was not preserved: Symeon’s version replaced it. As Rapp observes, Symeon’s menologion is preserved in at least 693 manuscripts: Rapp, “Byzantine Hagiographers,” 32.

57 “Threads of Authority,” 63; see also van Esbroeck, “Culte de la Vierge,” 182 (both n. 32 above).

58 *Homily on the Virgin’s Robe* (Combefis, ed., 754B).

59 *Homily on the Virgin’s Girdle* (PG 98:376B); John Geometres’ *Life of the Virgin* also appears to mention drops of Mary’s milk still visible on her girdle, although as Wenger notes, there is some ambiguity in this passage, and it is not entirely impossible that it might refer to her garment: Wenger, *L’Assomption*, 394–95.

himself and interrupts his encomium on the girdle to call attention also, if only for a moment, to Chalkoprateia's other great relic, the swaddling clothes of Christ, his *σπάργανα*.⁶⁰ Apparently, by the beginning of the eighth century, these clothes too were venerated alongside the girdle at Chalkoprateia and were also believed to "watch over and protect the faithful, binding and striking down enemies."⁶¹ Could this perhaps explain the *Patria*'s report that both Mary's girdle (ζώνη) and her garment (ἔσθής) were housed at this church? After all, the "type B" narrative of the Galbios and Kandidos legend reports that Mary had used her garment (ἔσθής), one of what was originally a pair, to swaddle her newborn son. Perhaps the *Patria* reflects a claim by Chalkoprateia to possess Mary's second garment, here named ἔσθής, at a time when the Virgin's Blachernai garment was increasingly identified more specifically as her μαφόριον.

Of course, Germanos's homily actually creates more problems than it potentially solves: his praise of Chalkoprateia's swaddling clothes (σπάργανα) directly contradicts the claim of the Galbios and Kandidos legend that Blachernai's garment had swaddled the infant Jesus, as could be proved by still visible drops of Mary's breast milk. This disagreement reveals that during the seventh century Chalkoprateia and Blachernai advanced competing claims to possess the clothing in which Mary had swaddled Christ⁶² and, furthermore, that both shrines sought to authenticate their relics, the girdle and the garment respectively, with an appeal to still-visible traces of Mary's breast milk.⁶³ These parallel claims undoubt-

edly reflect the rivalry that had come to exist between Constantinople's oldest and most revered Marian shrines, as each sought to outdo the other in both the number and the importance of its relics.⁶⁴ It remains uncertain which shrine was first to stake such claims on behalf of its relics, inasmuch as Germanos's homily is one of the earliest sources of information about Chalkoprateia's relics, and in the case of Blachernai's garment, the tradition of its use as swaddling clothes appears to be a secondary development. Nevertheless, it is clear that by the close of the seventh century, both Chalkoprateia and Blachernai possessed important Marian relics, and traditions connected with each shrine identified among these a garment that Mary had used to swaddle Jesus, adducing drops of Mary's breast milk as validation.

The *Life of the Virgin*, while perhaps the earliest document to mention this presence of Mary's girdle at Chalkoprateia, does not add much clarity to this confusion. The *Life* seems to know nothing of Chalkoprateia's claim to house the swaddling clothes of Christ, and its Galbios and Kandidos legend identifies this relic with the Virgin's Blachernai garment. Moreover, it mentions the girdle only very abruptly, explaining that "in this way the immaculate mother of Christ also gave to the same city her holy girdle." As already noted, it is difficult to know exactly what to make of this passage, since prior to this point the narrative gives no consideration to Mary's girdle. Perhaps the author believed that Galbios and Kandidos had brought the girdle to Constantinople together with Blachernai's garment, and perhaps, making the assumption that the elderly Jewish woman had possessed them both, he identifies the girdle as the second of two garments (σαμβουκιον/ἔσθής) that Mary gave to her servants just before her death.⁶⁵ Such, at least, is the solution proposed by van Esbroeck, who enlists support from a variant reading in the Synaxarion of Constantinople that identifies the girdle as one of these two garments.⁶⁶ Yet

60 *Homily on Mary's Girdle* (PG 98:376D–377B). Both relics were still at the shrine ca. 888, when the future patriarch Euthymios delivered his homily *On Mary's Girdle* (Jugie, *Homélies mariales*, 1:506, 512). There is also a hymn on the girdle by Joseph the Hymnographer (PG 105:1013C–D); the girdle is also mentioned in a ninth-century account of a miracle at the church of Chalkoprateia: Lackner, "Byzantinisches Marienmirakel" (n. 42 above), 853.

61 Germanos of Constantinople, *Homily on Mary's Girdle* (PG 98:377B).

62 Alexander Kazhdan observes that Andrew of Crete's homilies on the Nativity of Mary bring into focus at several points Mary's σπάργανα, her swaddling clothes, which may reveal yet another Marian relic in Constantinople. Kazhdan speculates on the source of Andrew's interest: was the relic perhaps housed in the church where Andrew delivered his homilies? A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)* (Athens, 1999), 45.

63 I am rather puzzled by Mango's claim that the girdle is represented at this time as "sharing the same origin" as her Blachernai garment: Mango, "Constantinople as Theotokopolis" (n. 33 above), 19. I do not know on what basis he makes this claim (he does not say); perhaps the reading from

the Synaxarion of Constantinople adduced by van Esbroeck, *Maxime le Confesseur*, 1:XXIV–XXV (Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, 935–36).

64 Krausmüller, "Making the Most of Mary" (n. 46 above), presents the best discussion of this rivalry that I have seen; see also N. H. Baynes, "The Supernatural Defenders of Constantinople," *AB* 67 (1949): 165–77, 258 n. 24; van Esbroeck, "Culte de la Vierge" (n. 32 above), 181–88, although many of van Esbroeck's arguments are rather speculative.

65 Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 105, 122 (van Esbroeck, ed., 136, 156 [Geor] and 92, 106 [Fr]).

66 Van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 1:XXIV–XXV; Delehaye, *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, 935–36.

the Galbios and Kandidos legend states quite deliberately that the garments had gone to two different women, only one of whom is identified as the old woman's relative.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, this passage from the *Life of the Virgin* prompts more questions than it answers, and it adds very little to what is already known from Germanos's early eighth-century homily.⁶⁸

Mary's Funeral Garments, the Late-Apostle Traditions, and the "Euthymiac History"

Complicating matters further still are the "late-apostle" traditions from the early Dormition narratives, with which the *Life of the Virgin* begins its discussion of Mary's relics. Utilizing the device of an apostle who arrives too late to participate in the Virgin's funeral, these relic traditions focus attention on the discovery of yet more of Mary's clothing, her funeral garments. One of the most remarkable (and rather few) points of unity among the early Dormition traditions is their near unanimous agreement that just prior to the Virgin's death, the apostles were miraculously transported from the ends of the earth in order to be present for her departure from this

world.⁶⁹ As we have already noted, however, in a number of accounts—including some that are early—one of the apostles, sometimes identified as Thomas, is delayed and does not reach Jerusalem in time for Mary's death.⁷⁰ When at the late apostle's request the apostles open the Virgin's tomb, they are surprised to find the tomb empty, except for the funeral garments that she left behind, her funeral wrappings (σπάργανα/σινδόνες) and/or her burial shroud (ὀθόνιον/σουδάριον).⁷¹

Several early Dormition narratives include a version of this tradition, and while it is difficult to date some of these narratives precisely, there is good evidence that the late-apostle tradition had already begun to circulate in the Greek East before the beginning of the seventh century. The earliest witness to this relic tradition is an Armenian homily on the Dormition attributed (incorrectly) to John Chrysostom. Although it is unlikely that this homily is as early as van Esbroeck proposes (the fourth century), there are signs that the lost Greek original is among the earliest Dormition accounts, probably belonging to the sixth century.⁷² Another early Dormition narrative that includes the late-apostle tradition is the Georgian *Transitus* of Ps.-Basil, whose liturgical traditions locate the composition of its Greek original sometime during the seventh century.⁷³ Neither of these narratives, though,

67 Van Esbroeck claims that John Geometres' *Life of the Virgin*, in its Dormition narrative, describes only one garment that was given to a woman prior to Mary's death: van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 92 n. 5. This, however, contradicts what was published by Wenger (*L'Assomption* [n. 4 above], 368–69). Perhaps van Esbroeck's complete edition of John's *Life of the Virgin* will clarify this point, if it is published. Also, it is not at all clear from the text of John's *Life* that he understood both relics as being housed at Blachernai, as van Esbroeck also maintains; I am most uncertain as to why van Esbroeck makes this claim: van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 109 n. 52 (Fr); Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 394–97.

68 One possibility is that this passage on the girdle may be interpolation, introduced either by the Georgian translator, Euthymios, or by someone before him who wanted to complete the account of Mary's relics with at least a brief mention of her girdle. Comparison with equivalent points in the *Life of the Virgin* by John Geometres and the *Life* by Symeon Metaphrastes could support this view. Symeon's *Life* (rather surprisingly) makes no mention of the girdle whatsoever, coming to a close with the Galbios and Kandidos legend. John Geometres' *Life*, however, introduces the girdle together with Mary's garment (περιβολή) at the beginning of the Galbios and Kandidos story, which John hastily summarizes, and thereafter they again appear together, as John ascribes the divine protection of the city and the empire to both relics (Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 394–95). Nevertheless, it is equally possible that both Symeon and John have omitted this passage because of the difficulties discussed above.

69 The main exceptions to this are the early Coptic traditions, which involve only a few of the apostles: see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions* (n. 7 above), 57–63; and idem, "The Sahidic Coptic Homily on the Dormition of the Virgin Attributed to Evodius of Rome: An Edition of Morgan MSS 596 & 598 with Translation," *AB* 117, nos. 3–4 (1999): 241–83.

70 The "late-apostle" traditions and their earliest representatives are discussed in Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 67–71.

71 Note also that John of Thessalonica's early seventh-century *Homily on the Dormition* sometimes mentions that the apostles discovered Mary's grave clothes by reopening her empty tomb on the third day. Yet the final section of this homily is extremely problematic: the various manuscripts of the non-interpolated version of the homily exhibit a rather dramatic diversity in their conclusions. Although Jugie selected a manuscript that concludes with the discovery of Mary's funeral garments as being in all probability the closest to the original, most manuscripts of this version of the homily do not mention the discovery of any grave clothes. In light of this, John's homily cannot be used as a reliable witness to the traditions about Mary's grave clothes. See Jugie, *Homélies mariales* (n. 40 above), 2:369–70, 401–5.

72 Ps.-John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Dormition* 15, 17 (M. van Esbroeck, "Une homélie arménienne sur la dormition attribuée à Chrysostome," *OC* 74 [1990]: 199–233, 218–19 [Arm] and 231–32 [Fr]). On the sixth-century date, see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 69–70; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption* (n. 31 above), 334–37.

73 Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 71, 132–40. See also Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 315–16. Mimouni also identifies the *Letter of (Ps-)*

has anything to say about the fate of Mary's grave clothes after their discovery, nor are there any hints of their veneration. The earliest version of the late-apostle tradition, as reflected in these two texts, forged no connections between these garments and either Constantinople or the church of Blachernai. This linkage was achieved, it seems, by the most famous of the late-apostle traditions, the excerpt from the *Euthymiac History* preserved in John of Damascus's second homily on the Dormition.⁷⁴ Now lost, the *Euthymiac History* appears to have been a *Life* of Euthymios (d. 473), the founder of coenobitic monasticism in Palestine. Nevertheless, its traditions about the Virgin's funeral relics were widely disseminated in medieval Byzantium, thanks to their inclusion in John's popular homilies on the Dormition.

Near the end of John's second homily for the Dormition, the text introduces a citation from "the *Euthymiac History*, book 3, chapter 40," a passage that appears in every known manuscript of John's second Dormition homily, including the earliest, copied in 890.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in spite of its impeccable transmission history within the manuscript tradition, there is general agreement that this legend of the Virgin's funerary relics was

not originally a part of John's homily. According to this passage from the *Euthymiac History*, the Virgin's grave clothes were sent to Constantinople at the request of the Empress Pulcheria and deposited at the church of Blachernai. The quotation appears as John engages in a rhetorical conversation with the Virgin's tomb, in which he asks the tomb, rather elaborately, where is Mary's body; the tomb responds with equal eloquence, explaining that it has been removed from the world. Then the passage from the *Euthymiac History* expands further on the traditions of Mary's tomb by introducing her funerary relics. At this point, the scene shifts from Jerusalem to Constantinople, where Pulcheria and Marcian are said to have built the church in Blachernai at the beginning of their reign. Hoping to honor their new shrine to the Virgin with an impressive Marian relic, they take advantage of the assembly at Chalcedon to approach Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem with a request that Mary's bodily remains be sent to Constantinople for deposition in the church of Blachernai, where they could protect the imperial capital.⁷⁶

Juvenal responds by explaining that, despite the silence of the scriptures on the matter, according to an ancient and revered tradition Mary passed from this world in miraculous fashion. The apostles were gathered to witness her death, after which they saw to her burial. Yet one of their company was delayed: an unnamed⁷⁷ apostle arrived three days after her burial but still wished to venerate her holy body one last time. When the apostles reopened the tomb to grant the late apostle's request, they were surprised to discover that the body was gone: all they found within were her grave clothes (ἐντάφια).

Dionysius to Titus among the early witnesses to this tradition, but in this instance his methods of dating are not reliable, as they depend entirely on his typology of dogmatic evolution: *ibid.*, 341–42. Jugie's proposal of the late seventh or early eighth century seems more likely (Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption* [n. 4 above], 157), although it is difficult to date this text with any certainty. Note also that this text describes only the discovery of an empty tomb, without any mention of grave clothes. The text was published in G. Sruandzants, "T'ught Dionēsiosi Ariopagats'woy" [The Letter of Dionysius the Areopagite], in *Hnots' ew norots' patmut' iwn vasn Dawt' i ew Movsesi Khorenats'woy* [History of the Old and New Concerning David and Moses Khorenatsi] (Constantinople, 1874), 110–15; trans. P. Vetter, "Das apocryphe Schreiben Dionysius des Areopagiten an Titus über die Aufnahme Mariä," *ThQ* 69 (1887): 133–38.

⁷⁴ In the discussion that follows, I use "Euthymiac History" in reference to the passage cited in John's homily and *Euthymiac History* to describe the now lost larger work from which this excerpt was taken. Note also that the Arabic Dormition narrative edited by Michel van Esbroeck ("Un témoin indirect de l'Histoire Euthymiaque dans une lecture arabe pour l'Assomption," *Parole de l'Orient* 6–7 [1975–76]: 479–91) is not as closely linked with the "Euthymiac History" as van Esbroeck indicates. This narrative is best understood as yet another example of the late-apostle tradition.

⁷⁵ A critical text of the "Euthymiac History" as preserved in John of Damascus's *Homily on the Dormition* 2.18 may be found in B. Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5 vols., Patristische Texte und Studien 7, 12, 17, 22, 29 (Berlin, 1969–88), 5:536–39. P. Voulet, ed., *Homélies sur la nativité et la dormition*, SC 80 (Paris, 1961), 169–75 is basically a corrected reprint of the text from the *Patrologia Graeca* (PG 96:748–52).

⁷⁶ While it is entirely unlikely that this legend reflects any historical events, it is not at all impossible, as Jugie suggests (*La mort et l'assomption*, 164), that the royal couple might have had some knowledge of the traditions about the removal of Mary's body from this world. Although the traditions emerged within the "mainstream" of orthodox Christian discourse only in the later fifth century, their history clearly extends into the fourth century: see Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions* (n. 7 above), 9–32.

⁷⁷ In both the PG and the Voulet editions (see n. 75), this apostle is identified as Thomas: PG 96:749A; Voulet, ed., *Homélies sur la nativité*, 170. Nevertheless, Kotter's critical edition, which I follow here, does not provide a name for the late apostle, and somewhat surprisingly, there is no indication of any name in the apparatus: Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5:539. According to Jugie, the apostle is not named in the earliest manuscript, copied in 890: see Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 162 n. 2. Wenger also reports that in the independent version of the "Euthymiac History," preserved in a Sinai manuscript from the eighth or ninth century, the apostle is similarly unnamed: Wenger, *L'Assomption* (n. 4 above), 137 n. 3.

The *Euthymiac History* then identifies several of those who were present for these events, citing as its source the famous passage from Ps.-Dionysius, *On the Divine Names* 3.2, which describes the apostles' assembly for the Virgin's funeral.⁷⁸ After hearing these things, the imperial couple asked Juvenal to send them the holy σορός containing Mary's funeral garments (ἱμάτια), and when he did, Pulcheria and Marcian deposited the relic in the church of the Theotokos at Blachernai.

Beginning with Martin Jugie, one scholar after another has identified this passage as an interpolation into John's homily, albeit a very early one; moreover, Jugie, and others who have followed him, even denied the very existence of a text entitled the *Euthymiac History*, from which this passage could have been lifted. Both Jugie and the most recent editor of John's text, Bonifaz Kotter, dismiss the *Euthymiac History* as an utter fiction, a "pretend history" that was invented by the forger who inserted this tradition about Mary's relics into John's second homily, probably sometime in the ninth century.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, thanks largely to the work of Antoine Wenger, we now know that this citation from the *Euthymiac History* was taken from an actual text, a now-lost *Life* of the fifth-century Palestinian monastic leader Euthymios.⁸⁰ Although Wenger remains convinced that the passage in John's homily is an early interpolation, he demonstrates that the *Euthymiac History* was in fact an actual text used by other writers, including Nikon of the Black Mountain, who in his *Pandektai* (composed between 1059 and 1067) quotes a passage from elsewhere in the *Euthymiac History*.⁸¹ Likewise, Cosmas Vestitor

made use of the *Euthymiac History* independently of John when composing his Dormition homilies in the later eighth century,⁸² and the passage cited by John appears in an independent state in an unedited Greek manuscript of the eighth or ninth century.⁸³ On this basis, Wenger concludes that an actual text entitled the *Euthymiac History* must have been in circulation by 750 at the latest, and that it very well may belong to the sixth century, a position also adopted by Simon Mimouni and van Esbroeck, both of whom attach more confidence to a sixth-century date.⁸⁴

Recently, Alexander Kazhdan has suggested that the prevailing view of this passage as an interpolation merits reconsideration:⁸⁵ given that this widely received opinion rests almost entirely on reasoning laid out long ago by Jugie in his groundbreaking study on the Dormition traditions, consideration of Kazhdan's proposal is long overdue. For all the many merits of Jugie's pioneering research, certain aspects of his work reflect a dogmatic interest in playing up traditions suggesting the Virgin's immortality, a position important to the Roman Catholic dogma of the Assumption (1950), in the proclamation of which Jugie played a central role.⁸⁶ In numerous instances, Jugie made highly questionable decisions in dating certain materials, in particular by attempting to date to a later period traditions about Mary's tomb or other traditions suggesting her death.⁸⁷ Inasmuch as the

78 B. R. Suchla, ed., *Corpus Dionysiacum*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita De divinis nominibus*, Patristische Texte und Studien 33 (Berlin, 1990), 141.

79 Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 159–67; Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5:504. Kotter apparently has not read Wenger and follows Jugie closely on this point as well as others where Wenger has demonstrated that Jugie was clearly in error. Kotter also follows Jugie in arguing that since Andrew of Crete did not refer to this tradition in his homilies on the Dormition, it could not have been in circulation during his lifetime, since he and John were both from Syro-Palestine—not a particularly persuasive argument.

80 Euthymios's importance in the foundation of Judean monasticism is well known from Cyril of Scythopolis's sixth-century *vita Euthymii*, a rather different text which has survived: E. Schwartz, ed., *Kyrrillos von Skythopolis*, TU 49.2 (Leipzig, 1939), 5–85.

81 Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 136–39. See also Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption* (n. 31 above), 556. The citation in Nikon of the Black Mountain's *Pandektai* is found in PG 96:748 n. 58. For the date of composition, see J. Thomas and A. C. Hero, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation*

Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments, 5 vols., Dumbarton Oaks Studies 35 (Washington, DC, 2000), 1:377–78.

82 Cosmas Vestitor, *Homily on the Dormition* 4:15–21 (Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 331–32).

83 Sinaiticus gr. 496, fols. 246v–251v. This version does not name the apostle, and it lacks the initial citation of "book 3, chapter 40" and other elements used to connect it with John's homily: see Wenger, *L'Assomption*, 137 n. 3.

84 Ibid., 137–38; van Esbroeck, "Témoign indirect" (n. 74 above), 480–85; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 556–61.

85 Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature* (n. 62 above), 81–82.

86 Regarding Jugie's role in the dogma's proclamation and his "Immortalist" belief regarding the Virgin, see P. E. Duggan, "The Assumption Dogma: Some Reactions and Ecumenical Implications in the Thought of English-Speaking Theologians" (S.T.D. diss., International Marian Research Institute, University of Dayton, 1989), 57–63. Owing partly to Jugie's influence, the Vatican's definition deliberately left open the question of whether Mary actually died or not.

87 See, for example, Jugie's discussions of Mary's tomb, which he dates rather late in spite of convincing archaeological evidence to the contrary (Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 85–92, 681–87; cf. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 98–107); or the passage from Ps.-Dionysius *On the Divine*

"Euthymiac History" deals with Mary's tomb and relics from her funeral garments, it is no surprise that Jugie argued not only that it was late but that there was never even such a text in the first place: it was all an interpolator's invention. Moreover, Jugie's understanding of the "Euthymiac History" is also tied up with his incorrect understanding of Blachernai's Marian relic, which, as noted above, he dated very late, believing that Theodore Synkellos's homily had been composed in response to the Russian attack of 860 rather than to the Avar assault. Consequently, Jugie regarded the "Euthymiac History" as the earliest extant tradition concerning Blachernai's relic. The "Euthymiac History" of course identifies Blachernai's garment as a funeral garment, which contradicted Jugie's immortalist beliefs, and thus could not, in his view, be an early tradition. Therefore, in spite of significant evidence to the contrary, particularly from the manuscript tradition, Jugie argued for a late date for both the "Euthymiac History" and this relic.⁸⁸ In view of these facts, it is worth raising the possibility that Jugie's theological concerns may have influenced his position on the "Euthymiac History," particularly now in light of Wenger's excellent work on this tradition, which undercuts some of Jugie's key arguments.

Although Jugie crafts his discussion of the "Euthymiac History" so that he appears to consider the question of interpolation prior to and separately from any questions about the date of the text, his prejudgment of the "Euthymiac History" as not only late but entirely fictitious determines his reasoning from the start. The bulk of his argument for interpolation consists in comparisons of style and vocabulary between the "Euthymiac History" and the rest of John's homilies on the Dormition. Jugie contrasts particularly the different words used to describe the Virgin's clothing: "ἐντάφια" and "ἱμάτια" in the "Euthymiac History," and "σινδόνες" in John's

second homily. Yet given the great diversity of expression used to describe Mary's clothing in other sources, one perhaps should not make too much of this particular difference. Similarly, Jugie points to differences in how the two sources, John's homily and the "Euthymiac History," describe the Virgin's burial and the fate of her body, and how they characterize the authority of their extra-biblical sources.⁸⁹ But if the passage cites an actual text, as Wenger has now shown, these observations are meaningless. Whether John himself or an interpolator introduced the passage into the homily, it is hardly a surprise to find that its author differs slightly from John's homily in vocabulary and content.

Jugie additionally argues that because Andrew of Crete, John's contemporary and countryman, does not seem to have known the *Euthymiac History*, then John could not have had access to any such source.⁹⁰ If, however, Andrew is to be our standard, then there were no written accounts of Mary's Dormition available at all when he composed his homilies for the Dormition in the early eighth century, since, rather astonishingly, Andrew claims that he could find no earlier traditions about the Virgin's departure from this life: only the passage from *On the Divine Names* presented a fortunate exception, according to him.⁹¹ Clearly, Andrew did not look very hard (or did not like much what he found), for despite his professed ignorance, the Christian East had been awash with Dormition narratives for at least two centuries,⁹² and his contemporaries John and Germanos do not appear to have had any trouble finding sources.⁹³ Thus, it hardly seems reasonable that Andrew's silence in regard to the *Euthymiac History* should be used to call its existence into question.

Of all the arguments that Jugie musters in favor of interpolation, only one really merits any serious

Names, where he adopts a rather dubious reading to prevent this from appearing to give early testimony of Mary's death and funeral (Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 99–101; cf. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 29–30); or the homily *In Simeonem et Annam* attributed to "Timothy of Jerusalem" (Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 70–76; cf. B. Capelle, "Les homélies liturgiques du prétendu Timothée de Jérusalem," *EphL* 63 [1949]: 5–26).

⁸⁸ Mango expresses surprise that "a scholar as well informed as Jugie should have argued that the *maphorion* was not attested before the ninth century and that the original relic was probably funerary": Mango, "Origins of the Blachernae Shrine" (n. 16 above), 69. It does not seem, however, that Jugie was uninformed; rather, this understanding of the relic reflects his broader interpretation of the Dormition traditions.

⁸⁹ Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 161–62.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 163–64. The argument is repeated in Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5, 505. Jugie's observation that the copyist of the earliest manuscript (from 890) wrote in the margin "Πολὺν ἱστορίαν φησὶν," does not add very much: it only demonstrates a single copyist's ignorance of this history whose existence is well established (whether it was added by John or is someone else's interpolation).

⁹¹ Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Dormition* 2 (PG 97:1060A–1064B). Note that the order of Andrew's first two homilies on the Dormition is reversed in the PG: see Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 234.

⁹² See Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 9–77.

⁹³ B. E. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary: Early Patristic Homilies* (Crestwood, NY, 1998), 20, 22; Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption*, 165, 169.

consideration, and that is his initial point: the “Euthymiac History” interrupts the “natural flow” of John’s discourse.⁹⁴ There is indeed a certain sense in which this citation from the *Euthymiac History* could appear to interrupt the homily’s rhetoric. As noted above, in this section John very ornately addresses Mary’s tomb itself, “as if [it] were alive,” inquiring about the location of her body. The tomb then offers the following response: “Why do you seek in a tomb one who has been taken up to the tabernacle of heaven? . . . Her holy, sacred body left its wrapping cloth [σινδόνες] behind, and after sharing with me her holiness, after filling me with the fragrance of ointments and making of me a holy shrine, she was raised up and departed, escorted by angels and archangels and all the heavenly powers.” The “tomb’s” answer continues at some length, after which John concludes, “You see, dear fathers and brothers, what this illustrious tomb has to say to us.” Then, if one removes the quotation from the *Euthymiac History*, the homily continues with, “And what shall we answer to the tomb ourselves?”⁹⁵ It is not hard to see how removing the “Euthymiac History” allows a sort of logical connection between these passages that is otherwise disrupted by the *Euthymiac History*’s relic traditions.

Nevertheless, as reasonable as this interpretation admittedly is, there is clearly room for another viewpoint, which has yet to be explored. For instance, it is no easier to understand why an interpolator would have chosen to interrupt the flow of the discourse at this point than it is to imagine that John himself designed this section of the homily around this lengthy quotation from the *Euthymiac History*. If indeed these two passages were originally coupled, as Jugie’s hypothesis suggests, it is difficult to explain why a later redactor would choose such an awkward spot for an interpolation. Alternatively, it may be that John himself crafted his rhetoric deliberately around this reference, using the quotation to clarify what the tomb had previously “answered.” When viewed in this light, the “Euthymiac History’s” interruption of the homily’s “natural flow” is not nearly so disruptive as Jugie and others following him have suggested. In fact, the “Euthymiac History” connects not only with a number of larger themes in John’s homiletic trilogy but equally with the immediate context of the tomb’s speech.

⁹⁴ Jugie, *La mort et l’assomption*, 160–61

⁹⁵ John of Damascus, *Homily on the Dormition* 2.17–19 (Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5, 539; trans. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 221–22).

Kazhdan offers the following brief assessment of the “Euthymiac History” and its status in John’s homily: “there is no evidence that it was inserted by somebody else into his text. If we assume, following the manuscript tradition, that the *Historia euthymiaca* was an authentic part of the trilogy and that the trilogy was somehow connected with relations between Jerusalem and Constantinople, the imagery of the emperor in brilliant royal garb appears to fit the overall context.”⁹⁶ According to Kazhdan, a major theme of John’s homiletic trilogy on the Dormition is the creation of a rhetorical link between Jerusalem, now under Islamic rule, and the imperial capital, Constantinople; the “Euthymiac History” unquestionably serves this purpose, perhaps even more than Kazhdan here recognizes. The “Euthymiac History’s” main role in the homily is clearly to harmonize the traditions of Mary’s Jerusalem tomb and her Dormition with the traditions of her relics in Constantinople. If, as Kazhdan argues, John’s homilies work to establish a symbolic connection between these two most important cities of the Christian East, then the quotation from the *Euthymiac History* is not at all intrusive but integral to this larger theme of his trilogy.

Yet the “Euthymiac History” has even more direct and obvious links with its immediate context in the second homily, specifically with the tomb’s discourse that precedes it. The main themes of the tomb’s speech prefigure each of the “Euthymiac History’s” central points: the tomb’s emptiness, the miraculous translation of her body, the angels present at her tomb, the funeral garments that were left behind, and the “ineffable fragrance” of her tomb. It seems almost as if John has designed the tomb’s response to anticipate the quotation from the *Euthymiac History*. When viewed from this perspective, the “Euthymiac History” does not so much interrupt the flow of John’s homily as it develops and reemphasizes each of the main points from the tomb’s speech. Indeed, the quotation’s introduction presents the passage in precisely this fashion: “And that all this is true is confirmed by the *Euthymiac History*, book 3, chapter 40.”⁹⁷ When viewed from this perspective, the “Euthymiac History” is integrally linked to the tomb’s response,

⁹⁶ Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, 82.

⁹⁷ John of Damascus, *Homily on the Dormition* 2.18 (ed. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 5, 536; trans. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 224 [slightly modified]). Of course, John may have given a somewhat different version of this homily when he delivered it orally: it may be that John himself added the passage from the *Euthymiac*

which it illuminates, and does not interrupt the flow of discourse. The rhetorical question that begins the following section, “And what shall we answer to the tomb ourselves?” serves to reconnect with John’s initial conceit, but it does so only to introduce a new topic. John uses the question to shift focus away from the tomb itself and toward the Virgin’s universal grace, which is not limited to her tomb but “is given without measure in all corners of the world.” Therefore, one should answer the tomb’s address not so much with reverence for the tomb itself but by making oneself a living “memorial” to the Virgin through an *imitatio Mariae*. Thus John concludes his second homily.⁹⁸

Finally, we might consider the nature of the source itself, the *Euthymiac History*, an apparently obscure biography of the founder of monasticism in the Judean desert. Who is more likely to have had access to such a text than John of Damascus himself, a priest of Jerusalem and a monk of Mar Saba?⁹⁹ When viewed through this rather different lens, John himself emerges as an increasingly likely agent of this “interpolation,” which very well may be an integral part of his second homily. While Jugie’s hypothesis of a very early intervention in the homily’s transmission certainly remains plausible, John’s inclusion of the passage himself is an equally viable possibility that even at this late date has yet to be seriously considered. Jugie’s mistaken assumption about the non-existence of the *Euthymiac History* from which this passage was taken has colored subsequent interpretation. Once this assumption is removed from the discussion, the prospect that John was himself the source of this textual insertion suddenly becomes quite credible.

Van Esbroeck has argued that the late-apostle traditions in the *Life of the Virgin* derive from the *Euthymiac History*, presumably in an effort to establish an early date for the latter text.¹⁰⁰ Yet the *Life* at no point betrays

any specific knowledge of the *Euthymiac History* or its story of how Bishop Juvenal, Pulcheria, and Marcian brought Mary’s funeral garments to Constantinople. Instead, the *Life*’s author explains that he has learned this information from oral tradition, hearing it from “reliable sources” who (and this is in contrast to tradition found in the *Euthymiac History*) have told him that the late apostle was in fact Thomas. Presumably the *Life*’s author encountered an earlier version of late-apostle tradition, as it circulated before the *Euthymiac History* reframed the legend with the encounter between Pulcheria and Juvenal at Chalcedon in an effort to reconcile conflicting traditions of the Virgin’s Blachernai garment and her grave clothes. In fact, the Blachernai garment, whose story follows immediately in the *Life*, is not in any way linked with the grave clothes from the late-apostle tradition, and the *Life* gives the distinct impression that it is introducing an entirely new item of clothing as it turns to the Galbrios and Kandidos legend.¹⁰¹ This difference certainly makes the *Life*’s dependence on the *Euthymiac History* highly doubtful.

Van Esbroeck additionally contends that the *Life of the Virgin*’s mention of Ps.-Dionysius’s reference to Mary’s death in *On the Divine Names* reveals the *Life*’s dependence on the *Euthymiac History*, but this argument is not persuasive.¹⁰² Judging from the *Life*’s comprehensiveness, its author clearly took considerable effort to gather as many different traditions about the Virgin’s life as he could find, and it is altogether likely that in his search he would have uncovered this famous passage as well. There is no compelling reason to assume that only from the *Euthymiac History* could the *Life*’s author have known Ps.-Dionysius’s account of the Dormition; it is far more likely that each biographer came upon this episode separately. Moreover, the *Life of the Virgin* handles this reference from Ps.-Dionysius quite differently from how it is handled in the *Euthymiac History*, and this seems compelling evidence of the *Life*’s independence. John’s citation from the *Euthymiac History* quotes directly from *On Divine Names* immediately after its account of the late apostle and the discovery of Mary’s relics, presumably

History and established these connections with his homily as he created the literary version that has been passed down in so many manuscripts.

98 John of Damascus, *Homily on the Dormition* 2.19 (Kotter, ed., *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, 5:539–40; trans. Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 222).

99 Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, 76–77.

100 *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:XVII–XIX. Much of van Esbroeck’s argument depends on his connection of an Arabic narrative of the late-apostle tradition with the “Euthymiac History” in his “Témoin indirect” (n. 74 above), but as noted above, there is actually little that would suggest a connection. It is best understood as simply another version of the late-apostle legend.

101 John Geometres’ *Life of the Virgin* follows his source in carefully distinguishing between Mary’s funeral garments and the relics of Constantinople: Wenger, *L’Assomption*, 392–95; Symeon Metaphrastes’ *Life of the Virgin* includes only the Galbrios and Kandidos legend and makes no mention of either Mary’s girdle or funeral garments.

102 Van Esbroeck, ed., *Maxime le Confesseur*, 2:XVIII–XIX.

in order to identify some of those who were present for the Virgin's funeral. The *Life of the Virgin*, however, does not directly cite the passage from *On Divine Names* but instead merely alludes to it on two separate occasions, both of which occur in its account of the Virgin's death rather than in the context of her burial and the late-apostle tradition. In light of the very different manners in which they treat this passage from *On the Divine Names*, it is difficult to see its inclusion as evidence of the *Life of the Virgin*'s dependence on the *Euthymiac History*.

Conclusions

The composite that emerges from this overview of early Marian relic traditions is rather chaotic and disjointed. Nothing could epitomize this disorder any better than the confusion evidenced in the Greek Marian homilies of the eighth century. Andrew of Crete, in his early eighth-century homilies on the Dormition, is resolute that nothing at all remained behind in the Virgin's tomb: neither burial shroud (ἐντάφια) nor funeral wrappings (σπάργανα).¹⁰³ Yet as we have seen, the late-apostle traditions, with their focus on the relics of Mary's grave clothes, were already well in place by this time and may in fact be an integral part of John of Damascus's second Dormition homily. Andrew's insistence on this point is all the more strange given the special emphasis that his contemporary Germanos places on the Virgin's funeral wrappings and her shroud in his homilies for the Dormition. Germanos describes how the faithful who had gathered for Mary's funeral tried to take a piece of her burial shroud (ἐντάφια) in hopes that such a relic would bring them blessings. He goes on to relate how the apostles, when faced with the awesome task of burying the Virgin, feared touching her body directly, especially after witnessing the horrible fate of Jephonias, the Jew said to have attacked her bier during the funeral procession. Consequently, the apostles were careful to touch only her shroud (σινδών) as they placed her in the tomb. Then, as they were in the very

act of laying her to rest in the tomb, Germanos tells us, her body was suddenly snatched from their hands; only her funeral shroud (σινδών) was left behind, which the apostles immediately held forth as proof of her miraculous translation.¹⁰⁴ John of Damascus also describes with unmistakable clarity the wrapping clothes, the σινδόνες, that were left behind in the tomb. Clearly Andrew once again, as in his failure to find any prior traditions of Mary's Dormition, has either failed to do his homework or did not have access to much of a library.

Even more puzzling is the keen interest evinced by Andrew's homilies on the Virgin's Nativity in Mary's swaddling clothes (σπάργανα), which she wore as her mother Anne nursed her.¹⁰⁵ As Kazhdan observes, Andrew's focus on Mary's swaddling clothes could seem to suggest that this relic, much like her son's swaddling clothes, had become a focus of veneration in the imperial capital.¹⁰⁶ Is it possible that this, Mary's first garment, should be added to the veritable suitcase of her clothing that appears to have arrived in Constantinople during the early Middle Ages? Or perhaps Andrew simply presents a different understanding of the Virgin's σπάργανα, interpreting them as her swaddling clothes rather than funeral wrappings? If we step outside of Constantinople and add to the mix the alleged closet of miracle-working clothing that Mary left behind in her hometown of Nazareth, as described by the Piacenza Pilgrim in the late sixth-century, the confusion surrounding Mary's clothing relics swells.¹⁰⁷ Complicating matters further

¹⁰³ Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Dormition* 1 (PG 97:1081D): Πῶς οὐκ ἐν σοροῖς τὰ ἐντάφια; See also Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Dormition* 3 (PG 97:1097C), where he asks rhetorically, Τίνα σου τὰ ἐντάφια; Τίνα τὰ σπάργανα; Τίνες οἱ στολισμοί; ("none" being of course the implied answer).

¹⁰⁴ Germanos of Constantinople, *Homily on the Dormition* 2 (3) 9–10 (PG 98:369A–372A). There are, however, a couple of problems with Germanos's accounts of Mary's burial. For instance, in his first homily, Germanos describes the successful placement of Mary's body in the tomb, in contrast to its spontaneous translation in this homily: PG 98:345A–348A. Also, following the translation of Mary's body, this second homily reports that her "shroud was then gently taken up into the air from the Apostles in a light cloud . . . and disappeared." Nevertheless, according to that same homily, the apostles then immediately produced her shroud, which apparently had not disappeared, and they presented it to the crowd as indisputable evidence of her body's miraculous translation. On the numbering of Germanos's homilies, see M. Jugie, "Les homélies de Saint Germain de Constantinople sur la dormition de la Sainte Vierge," *EO* 16 (1913): 219–21; Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature* (n. 62 above), 64.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew of Crete, *Homily on the Nativity of the Theotokos* 3 (PG 97:860B–C) and 4 (PG 97:861C, 864A).

¹⁰⁶ Kazhdan, *History of Byzantine Literature*, 45.

¹⁰⁷ *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini* 5 (P. Geyer, ed., *Itineraria et alia Geographica*, CCSL 175 [Turnhout, 1965], 161); I thank Andrew Jacobs for reminding me of this tradition.

still, at approximately the same time Gregory of Tours identifies Marian relics at several different locations in the Frankish kingdom. While he does not identify these with items of her clothing, it is hard to imagine (although not altogether impossible) that these were bodily relics, inasmuch as in the same text Gregory relates the tradition of Mary's Dormition and the miraculous removal of her body from this world.¹⁰⁸

In addition, the almost cultivated vagueness with which the earliest sources describe Blachernai's relic further complicates any effort to construct an orderly history of the early cult of the Virgin's clothes. The earliest source, the "type A" Galbios and Kandidos legend, describes this pilfered garment in only the most general terms as an ἐσθής and a περιβόλαιον. The "type B" narrative from the later sixth century adds only the equally vague ἱμάτιον, as well as introducing the idea that this item of clothing had been used by Mary as swaddling clothes for her newborn son. The "type B" narrative also underscores the earlier version's link between this garment and Mary's two "tunics," χιτῶνας, as they are called in the early Dormition narratives. Other sources referring to Blachernai's relic use many of the same generic clothing terms, especially ἐσθής, until the mid-tenth century, when Symeon Logothete first uses the term ὠμοφόριον to describe Blachernai's relic in the context of the Russian attacks of 860.¹⁰⁹ Several later chronicles repeat Symeon's identification of the garment as a μαφόριον or ὠμοφόριον, but all of these depend on Symeon's account and simply repeat his usage.¹¹⁰ Photius, however, who writes as an eyewitness to these events, refers to the Virgin's garment as a περιβολή and a στολή and does not use the terms μαφόριον or ὠμοφόριον.¹¹¹ Eventually, this garment's identity as a

μαφόριον, a "veil" or "robe," appears to have stabilized, but only over the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries and not before.¹¹² For this reason, it is quite anachronistic to describe Blachernai's relic as the Virgin's robe or veil (μαφόριον) in the sixth and seventh centuries, when it is far from clear that it had attained this identity.¹¹³

Adding to this confusion is the late-apostle tradition from the early Dormition narratives. Beginning in the sixth century, these legends of Mary's empty tomb identify a different sort of clothing relic, the funeral garments that Mary left behind after her body's miraculous translation. With the important exception of the "Euthymiac History," these narratives relate merely the apostles' discovery of these garments occasioned by the late apostle; they say nothing about the relics' subsequent fate. Most of the late-apostle traditions survive in languages other than Greek, but their respective vocabulary for these items of clothing seems to correspond with σπάργανα/σινδόνες for her funeral wrappings and ὀθόνιον/σουδάριον for the burial shroud.¹¹⁴ This relic tradition is almost certainly of provincial origin, perhaps Jerusalem, as is suggested by its connections with the Dormition traditions, its focus on Mary's tomb, and its variance with the relic traditions of Constantinople. Other than the Georgian *Life of the Virgin*, the first evidence of any influence by these legends on the culture of the imperial capital appears in Germanos's Dormition homilies, where he shows an interest in the relics of Mary's burial garments, albeit without the story of the late apostle. Nevertheless, as

108 Gregory of Tours, *In gloria martyrum*, incipiunt capitula; 1.8; 1.10; 1.18–19 (B. Krusch, ed., *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis miracula et opera minora*, 2nd ed., MGH, ScriptRerMerov 1.2 [Hanover, 1969], 35 [485], 43 [493], 45 [495], 49–50 [499–500]). For Gregory's account of Mary's Dormition and Assumption, see *In gloria martyrum* 1.4 (Krusch, ed., *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis*, 39 [489]).

109 Symeon Logothete, *Chronicle* (I. Bekker, ed., *Leonis grammatici chronographia*, CSHB 47 [Bonn, 1842], 240–41).

110 See Mango, *Homilies of Photius* (n. 49 above), 76–77.

111 Photius, *Homily IV: The Departure of the Russians* 4 (C. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, 5 vols. [Paris, 1883], 5:169b–170a; see also S. Aristarches, *Τοῦ ἐν ἀγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Φωτίου λόγοι καὶ ὁμιλίες ὀγδοήκοντα τρεῖς*, 2 vols. [Constantinople, 1900], 2:41–42, as cited in Carr, "Threads of Authority" [n. 32 above], 84, n. 37; trans. Mango, *Homilies of Photius*, 102–3). See also Carr, "Threads of Authority," 63–65. Joseph the Hymnographer, a contemporary of Photius, refers to Mary's garment as ἐσθής in his hymn on this subject: *Μηναίων: Ἀπασαν*

τὴν ἀνήκουσαν αὐτῷ ἀκολουθίαν μετὰ τῆς προσδῆξης τοῦ τυπικοῦ, 12 vols., Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη "Φῶς" (Athens, 1970–77), 11:19–25. Nevertheless, according to Jugie, Joseph occasionally used the word μαφόριον in reference to this garment, along with περιβόλαιον, περιβολή, στολή, and φορεσία, although Jugie does not cite specific examples: Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption* (n. 4 above), 694.

112 See Carr, "Threads of Authority," 62–69. See also Jugie, *La mort et l'assomption*, 689–96; Janin, *Géographie ecclésiastique* (n. 32 above), 162–63.

113 As, for instance, Mango frequently refers to this garment in his "Origins of the Blachernae Shrine" (n. 16 above). On this point, see also Av. Cameron, "The Early Cult of the Virgin," in Vassilaki, *Mother of God* (n. 33 above), 3–15, 11–12; eadem, "Cult of the Virgin" (n. 34 above), 11–12.

114 Ps.-John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Dormition* 17 (van Esbroeck, "Homélie arménienne" [n. 72 above], 219 [Arm] and 232 [Fr]: պատանս (for σπάργανα?); Ps.-Basil of Caesarea, *Transitus Mariae* 87 (van Esbroeck, "L'Assomption de la Vierge" [n. 9 above], 161): სახუეველნი, სუდარი; Maximus the Confessor, *Life of the Virgin* 117 (van Esbroeck, ed., 150 [Geor]): სახუეველნი, ტილო; van Esbroeck, "Témoin indirect" (n. 74 above): كفن, عمامة. As van Esbroeck notes, the latter word means "turban," but surely this is an attempt to translate σπάργανα. His attempt to identify عمامة as a translation of ζώνη seems rather dubious.

we have seen, Andrew professes complete ignorance of these or any other traditions about Mary's burial. The author of the *Euthymiac History* was the first to merge the traditions of the late apostle's discovery of Mary's funeral clothes with the veneration of her garment at Blachernai by conflating these two relics. That this contradicted the well-established story of Galbios and Kandidos does not seem to have troubled its author: perhaps he did not know this largely Constantinopolitan legend. Yet in spite of this rather obvious tension, the success of John's homiletic trilogy, which Brian Daley describes as "the most celebrated of all the ancient homilies for the feast of the Dormition," ensured that this attempt at harmonization would be widely disseminated and influential.¹¹⁵

As for the garments venerated at the church of Chalkoprateia, their identity is far more straightforward, but their origins and early history are surprisingly murky. Germanos's early eighth-century homily clearly identifies these items as the Virgin's "girdle" or "belt" (ζώνη) and the swaddling clothes (σπάργανα) of her newborn son. How or when they arrived in Constantinople, however, is another matter entirely. Certainly the arrival of both garments predates Germanos's homily, which says nothing of their invention or translation, and his treatment of the girdle in particular suggests that it is a relic with some history in the city already by this time. The infant Jesus's swaddling clothes, however, raise a different set of vexing questions. According to the "type B" Galbios and Kandidos legend, which dates to the later sixth century at the latest, the devotees of Blachernai's garment had claimed for their relic the honor of serving as Christ's swaddling clothes. It would appear that by the seventh

century, the churches of Blachernai and Chalkoprateia had both advanced competing claims to possess the garment in which Christ had been swaddled. No doubt the eventual identity of Blachernai's garment with a different sort of wrappings, Mary's funeral wrappings (also σπάργανα), in John's Dormition homilies only served to complicate matters further.

This confusion is replicated rather than resolved in the Maximus *Life of the Virgin*. Nearly all of these early relic traditions make an appearance in the coda to the Georgian *Life*, but its author makes no attempt to reconcile them, and the result is a rather disjointed pastiche. In comparison with other sections of the *Life*, the dissonances among the various relic traditions here are left surprisingly unresolved. This seems to reflect the work of someone bringing things together for the first time, without yet knowing exactly how to make them fit, at a time when the cult of Mary's relics in Constantinople was still developing and somewhat confused, before the homilies of Germanos and John brought a measure of clarity, however limited, to these practices. Such disorder is entirely congruent with the *Life*'s composition sometime during the seventh century, the date indicated by numerous other features of the *Life*. Thus, while the *Life*'s relic traditions do not anchor the *Life* to the beginning of the seventh century in the way that van Esbroeck attempts to argue, they comport well with the seventh-century Constantinopolitan milieu in which this earliest *Life of the Virgin* was most likely composed.

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115 Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 21.